

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

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like champions
once again**

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2005

Iraq to impose curfew, seal borders during vote

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of waking up
in Ramadi*

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JOSEPH GORDONO/Stars and Stripes

First Lt. Ed Kaspar of the 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery pours coffee grounds into a grinder at a makeshift coffeehouse on a U.S. base in Ramadi. A mortar attack on the building — the battalion's former logistics office — in October spurred the extreme makeover into a coffeehouse, complete with a "skylight" where a single mortar round smashed through the roof.

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

U.S. sanctions against China: The Bush administration has quietly applied new sanctions against eight Chinese companies for helping Iran with its missile programs, the White House spokesman said Tuesday.

Administration officials confirmed a report in *The New York Times* that said the State Department had served notice to the Chinese firms early this month. A North Korean company also was penalized.

The sanctions prohibit the companies from doing business in the United States, and ban them from obtaining licenses that allow them to export or obtain a patent for American technologies.

"We have long had concerns about Iran's development of longer-range ballistic missiles and Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons," White House press secretary Scott McClellan said. "The penalties mean the companies will not be able to do business with U.S. government departments or agencies, and that American technology cannot be exported to the companies."

Station Island ferry crash: Michael Ganas, the pilot at the helm of the Station Island ferry that crashed into a pier in 2003, angrily blamed himself for the wreck that killed 11 and injured dozens, according to documents released Tuesday by federal investigators.

The information about the pilot was provided in the testimony of Patrick Ryan, the city's director of ferry operations, who now is being prosecuted for his alleged role in the crash. Ryan told probes that he rushed to the scene of the crash, a 2003 ferry crash, where he met ferry pilot Richard Smith.

"Patty, I'm sorry, I blacked out. It's all my fault. I killed all these people," Smith told Ryan, according to the director's testimony.

Avalanche rescue effort: After four days of searching a 16-acre debris field in Park City, Utah, rescue crews ended their search for a probe for victims of last week's powerful avalanche.

Summit County Sheriff Dave Edmunds said chances were good that the avalanche near Park City, about 20 miles east of Salt Lake City, trapped only one person.

Monday was the last day searchers would gather in large numbers.

A limited search will continue, but bigger groups won't scale the mountain again unless authorities receive a credible tip that someone is missing.

World

Uzbek terror trial: Six people went on trial in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent on Tuesday on suspicion of involvement in deadly attacks last year that the government blamed on Islamic radicals.

The two women and four men are being tried in the Tashkent City Court on charges of terrorism and extremism and could be sentenced to death if convicted, court officials said.

Uzbekis have jailed more than 100 people in connection with the two waves of explosions and attacks last spring and summer, which killed more than 50 people. The U.S. and Israeli embassies were among the targets.

Authorities in the predominantly Muslim former Soviet republic have blamed the violence on al-Qaida-linked groups based outside the country.

Rights groups, however, say the attacks were inspired by the government's harsh crackdown on Muslims who choose to worship outside state-run mosques.

Iran nuclear suspicions: The U.N. nuclear watchdog agency is pushing for a fresh look at an Iranian military complex linked by the United States to the country's nuclear research just days after being granted limited



Iran illegal summons: Iranian Nobel peace laureate Shirin Ebadi, speaks with media during a press conference Monday in Tehran, Iran. In a rare admission of fault, Iran's judiciary conceded Tuesday that a Revolutionary Court summons for Ebadi was illegal, and said the matter would be dropped. But Judiciary spokesman Jamal Karimirad denied Ebadi's statement that Iran holds detainees in solitary confinement. Ebadi, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003, defied the Revolutionary Court on Sunday when she refused to obey a summons that asked her to appear without giving a reason.

ed access, diplomats said Tuesday.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is interested in testing another part of the sprawling Parchin complex just outside Tehran in its search for radiation that could point to such research, the diplomats said.

The Bush administration has accused Iran of being part of an "axis of evil" with North Korea and prewar Iraq. The United States alleges Iran may be testing high-explosive components for nuclear weapons, using an inert core of depleted uranium at Parchin as a dry run for a bomb that would use fissile material.

The request by the Vienna, Austria-based IAEA comes just days after its inspectors were given partial access to the site and were allowed to take environmental samples for analysis in the agency's European laboratories.

Kuwait extremists: At least 20 Kuwaiti and Saudi men have been arrested and are being interrogated about deadly clashes between police and Islamic fundamentalists earlier this month, an Interior Ministry official said.

Kuwait has been pursuing extremists since two deadly shootings with fundamentalists this month. Kuwait, a major ally of Washington since the 1991 Persian Gulf War that freed it from Iraqi occupation, has struggled with extremists opposed to U.S. forces in the country as well as the invasion of Iraq that toppled Saddam Hussein almost two years ago.

Twenty to 25 Kuwaiti and Saudi men are in custody — up from 15 detainees reported on Monday by the Interior Minister — and are being questioned about the clashes, according to an interior ministry official who spoke on customary condition of anonymity.

Ukraine election: Ukraine's Supreme Court paved the way Tuesday for the inauguration of Western-leaning reformer Viktor Yushchenko in a ruling issued while it still considers an appeal by the Kremlin-favored losing candidate.

Representatives of former Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, who filed the appeal, denounced the decision as politically biased and warned it would undermine Ukraine's stability and aggravate tensions.

The court, responding to a motion by Yushchenko's camp, ruled that the results of the presidential election can be published in two government newspapers — a precondition for the inauguration.

Yushchenko won a Dec. 26 runoff election, a rerun of Nov. 21 balloting in which Yanukovich's victory was annulled by the court because of massive fraud.

Pakistan bombing suspects: Police on Tuesday arrested three brothers for allegedly harboring suspected suicide bombers who later made an attempt on the life of Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz.

The suspects, alleged members of the Islamic militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed, were identified as Abdul Moim, Abdul Basit and Nisar.

Chaudhry Ifthikhar, the chief of police in Rawalpindi, a city near the capital, said the three were nabbed in their home village in Attock, a district to the west, where the attack was launched July 30 as Aziz campaigned for a by-election, weeks before he took office. Aziz escaped unhurt but nine other bystanders were killed.

Zimbabwe abuse allegations: A British newspaper reported Tuesday that it had received fresh evidence of human rights abuses in Zimbabwe by pro-government supporters ahead of parliamentary elections.

The Guardian daily said photographs taken by an activist show evidence of intimidation and violence against opposition figures.

It published one of the pictures, showing a woman with burns who was reportedly doused in paraffin and set alight.

The Zimbabwean High Commission in London dismissed the claims in *The Guardian* story. "It's a highly opinionated article which doesn't contain any facts at all," said Gordie Magwenza, the deputy high commissioner.

Stories and photos from *The Associated Press*



Yushchenko

Iraq tightens its borders during elections

Suicide bombing at Shiite party's office kills 2; abducted archbishop freed after a day

By BASSEM MROUE
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraq will seal its borders, extend a curfew and restrict movement to protect voters during the Jan. 30 election, officials announced Tuesday after the latest major insurgent attack — a suicide bombing that killed two people outside the offices of a leading Shiite political party.

President Bush spoke Tuesday morning with Iraqi interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, and Jordan's King Abdullah, the latest in a series of conversation between world leaders on Iraq's efforts to ensure maximum participation in the election.

Amid the insurgent campaign to ruin the vote, a Catholic archbishop kidnapped by gunmen in the northern city of Mosul was released Tuesday, a day after his abduction. The Vatican had called his abduction a "terrorist act."

Elsewhere, a third American died in fighting in Iraq's troubled Anbar province, west of Baghdad, the military said Tuesday. Two others assigned to the 1st Infantry Expeditionary Force also were killed in action there Monday.

The military gave no other details and it was unclear whether the three troops were killed in a suicide car bombing in the western city of Ramadi that U.S. officials said resulted in American casualties.

Tuesday's suicide car bombing in Baghdad gouged a crater in the pavement outside the offices of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, a main contender in the election.

The Shiite party, known as SCIRI, has close ties to Iran and is strongly opposed by Sunni Muslim militants.

The assailant took guards at a checkpoint leading to the party's office that he was part of SCIRI's security staff, and he detonated his bomb-laden car at the guard post when he was not allowed to enter.

Iraqi police officials reported the bomber and two others were injured, including three police.

SCIRI will not be "frightened by such an act," party spokesman Ridha Jawad said. "SCIRI will continue the march toward building Iraq, establishing justice and holding the elections."

Sunni Muslim militants, who make up the bulk of Iraq's insurgency, are increasingly honing in on Shiites in their effort to ruin the



Above: A U.S. soldier treats an injury to an Iraqi at the scene of a suicide car bombing Tuesday outside the offices of Iraq's largest Shiite political party, which killed two, police and the U.S. military said. **Below:** Basile Georges Casmoissa, 66, the archbishop of the Syrian Catholic Church, center, is greeted Tuesday as he arrives back to the church in Mosul, 225 miles north of Baghdad. The archbishop, kidnapped in Iraq on Monday, was freed without any ransom being paid, a church official said.

election that is widely expected to propel their religious rivals to a position of dominance. Many Sunnis argue that security is precarious and the election should not take place under foreign occupation.

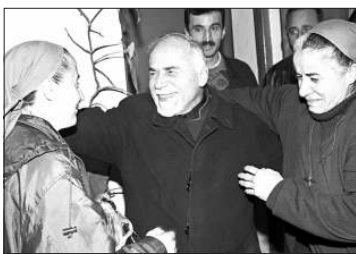
The Independent Electoral Commission announced that the country's international borders would be closed from Jan. 29 until Jan. 31, except for Muslim pilgrims returning from the hajj in Saudi Arabia.

Iraqis also will be barred from traveling between provinces and a nighttime curfew will be imposed during the same period, according to a statement from the commission's Farid Ayar.

Such measures had been expected because of the grave security threat U.S. and Iraqi authorities are hoping to encourage a substantial turnout but fear that if most Sunnis stay away from the polls, the legitimacy of the new government will be in doubt.

Iraq's interior minister warned that if the country's Sunni Arab minority bows to rebel threats and stays away from the polls, the nation could descend into civil war.

Falah Hassan al-Naqib, a Sunni, told reporters he expects Sunni insurgents to escalate at-



tacks before the election, especially in the Baghdad area. Voters are to choose a new 275-member National Assembly.

"If any group does not participate in the elections, it will constitute treason," al-Naqib said, adding that "boycotting the elections will not produce a National Assembly that represents the Iraqi people" but will cause "a civil war that will divide the country."

Allawi said he will boost the country's armed forces with

70,000 more troops in an effort to take over more security tasks from U.S.-led forces. He said the forces would be "equipped with the most advanced weapons."

In Mosul, Syrian Catholic Archbishop Basile Georges Casmoissa was freed a day after he was seized near his church, according to local officials and the Vatican. "I'm happy to have returned to the bishop's office," Casmoissa told Vatican Radio. "I can say that I wasn't mistreated."

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Monday, at least 1,366 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,071 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is eight higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. Friday.

The British military has reported 76 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 16; Ukraine, 16; Spain, 11; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary, Latvia and Kazakhstan report one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,228 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 962 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ A soldier who injured Sunday when his vehicle flipped into a canal in western Baghdad died on Monday.

■ Three servicemen were killed in Anbar province.

The latest fatalities reported by military:

■ Army Sgt. Nathaniel T. Swindell, 24, New York; died Saturday in Mosul, Iraq, from a noncombat injury, assigned to the 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, Fort Lewis, Wash.

He did not identify his captors but said he did not believe his kidnapping was meant as an attack on the church. Earlier, the Catholic news agency MISNA reported that the 66-year-old archbishop's captors demanded a \$200,000 ransom.

AP reporter Sana Salameh contributed to this report.

Two political candidates assassinated in southern Iraq

BAGHDAD — Assassins in southern Iraq gunned down two candidates running in the Jan. 30 elections for the political coalition of interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, a member of the group said Tuesday.

Alaa Hamid, who was running on Allawi's slate of candidates for the 275-member National Assembly, was shot dead Monday in the southern port city of Basra in front of his family, a member of Allawi's Iraqi Na-

tional Accord said. Hamid was also the deputy chairman of the Iraqi Olympic Committee in Basra.

The other slain candidate was Riad Radi, who was running in the local race for Basra's provincial council on a list supported by Allawi's INC, the official said on condition of anonymity. Masked gunmen fired on his car Sunday as he was driving with his family, the official said.

Sunni Muslim militants who oppose holding the elections have warned candidates not to run. With less than two weeks until the vote, many candidates haven't even announced they're running for fear of attack.

Basra, a predominantly Shiite Muslim city, has been relatively calm in recent weeks. In central Iraq, meanwhile, there have been numerous attacks on polling offices in the past days.

There was violence in Basra on Sunday, as insurgents fired four mortar rounds at schools slated to serve as polling centers.

In Baghdad Monday, masked gunmen shot dead another candidate, Shaker Jabbar Sahla, a Shiite Muslim who was running in the National Assembly election for the Constitutional Monarchy Movement. The party is headed by Sharif Ali bin Hussein, a cousin of Iraq's last king.

Soldiers learning to expect the unexpected

Even distributing election materials gets complicated after a few minutes

BY JOSEPH GIORDONO

Stars and Stripes

TAMIM, Iraq — Many of the 150,000 U.S. troops in Iraq find themselves wearing a number of different helmets during any single day. Any mission may start out according to plan but take an entirely new direction a few minutes later.

While their official job title may be infantryman or supply specialist, troops find themselves working as election boosters, detectives and medics all during the same shift.

On Monday morning, soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry — a unit that deployed from South Korea with the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division — planned to hand out election information and paste up posters encouraging Iraqis to vote.

Before they could get started, though, a radio call came in that one of the company's soldiers had been shot and wounded while manning an observation post near Ramadi. The soldiers with the election material turned into a quick reaction force, converging on where the shooting occurred.

The wounded soldier, who was shot in the hip, was evacuated to an aid station near Ramadi, where he was later reported in stable condition.

The other soldiers rounded up a group of young Iraqi men working nearby. "We just got shot at. Where did the shots come from?" Capt. Kevin Capozzoli, Company A commander, asked each of the men through an interpreter.

Capozzoli questioned each member of the group individually; each pleaded ignorance. Finally, two of the young men admitted to hearing the shot and seeing three men leaving a nearby building right after the incident.

"Sometimes this is almost like

police work," Capozzoli said. "These guys were right here, they heard the shot. But they're either afraid to tell us, or they know and they don't want to tell us."

Union delegates

Earlier in the day, the soldiers escorted a pair of U.S. civilian contractors to a police station in Baghdad to offer police leaders a developmental course. The contractors, who work for private firms hired by the Pentagon to restrain the Iraqi police, were instead questioned by the police about pay.

The cops had not been paid for weeks, and the police chief reported that his men would walk off the job if they weren't paid in two days. The contractors and soldiers explained they had nothing to do with their pay, but promised to ask again.

A closer look

The previous night, Company A soldiers learned that in Iraq, two plus two sometimes does equal five.

While on a night patrol through the streets of Tamim — a section of Ramadi just across the river from downtown — the soldiers heard a burst of heavy gunfire from within the town. They investigated and found that a group of gunmen had fired on an Iraqi police station; the police had returned fire but hit nothing.

According to the police, two or three men in a maroon sedan had fired at the station, then fled into a nearby neighborhood. The soldiers got back into their Humvees, turned a few corners and — to their surprise — found three men in a maroon sedan.

Everything seemed to add up. It was the right number of men, acting strangely, out after curfew in a vehicle that matched the description given by police. The sol-



PHOTOS BY JOSEPH GIORDONO/Stars and Stripes

Above: Capt. Kevin Capozzoli, commander of Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry, questions an Iraqi laborer about Monday's shooting of a Company A soldier Monday near Ramadi. **Right:** A Ramadi man looks at election information handed out by U.S. troops Monday.

diers questioned the men and wiped them down with swabs to test for gunpowder residue on their hands and faces, which would indicate they'd recently fired weapons. But there was none.

A few other soldiers searched the house where the men said they lived. Inside, they found an assault rifle and ammo. A teenage boy inside excitedly showed them pictures of a shot-up BMW; none of the soldiers were sure why.

But after at least 30 minutes, much pantomiming, and attempts at breaking the language barrier, one of the men produced a weapon's permit issued by Company C, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry. They were bodyguards for a local sheik and had been granted per-

mission to carry the weapon. One of the men pulled out a cellular phone and called the sheik.

After a little more discussion and a call to headquarters to check the men's names, the soldiers handed out tip-line phone numbers and asked the men to report any suspicious activity.

"Everything pointed at these being the guys," Capozzoli said. "If they'd come up positive for gunpowder, we'd have taken them in."

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Two battalions hit hard by loss of young soldier from Minn.

BY JASON CHUDY

Stars and Stripes

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq — Spc. Dwayne McFarlane Jr. wasn't old enough to buy a beer, but the Cass Lake, Minn., native was old enough to have completed one tour of Iraq and volunteer for another.

Mac, as he was known to his fellow soldiers, had been planning to volunteer for a deployment to Afghanistan after he returned from Iraq a second time.

Instead, more than 100 of his fellow 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division soldiers honored his life and mourned his death during a memorial service Monday.

Many more would have attended if it were not for ongoing missions, soldiers said, which is something Mac would have understood.

McFarlane, 20, was killed Jan. 9 by a roadside bomb while patrolling in the nearby town of Abu Ghari, where he served as a fire support specialist.

Mac's loss hit two of the brigade's battalions hard. He was assigned to the Allons (French for "Let's go") of the 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, but was attached to the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment at the time of his death.

"We consider him part of the Golden Dragon family," said Col. John Smith, 2-14 battalion com-

mander. "We'll remember him as an Allon and as a Golden Dragon."

Staff Sgt. Eugene Chavez, fire support noncommissioned officer, spoke of McFarlane as one of the best soldiers he has ever seen.

"He had the potential to go a long way in his military career," he said during the service. Chavez said that McFarlane was the kind of guy who would stand guard duty with new soldiers so they wouldn't be alone during their first-ever shift.

"He knew what being here entailed," recalled friend Pfc. Randy Guerra. "Anybody who knew Mac knew he was one of a kind."

McFarlane is survived by his uncle, Don Bellanger, brother, Darrell, and sister, Melissa.

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JASON CHUDY/Stars and Stripes

A 10th Mountain Division soldier offers his final salute at a memorial service Monday at Camp Liberty for Spc. Dwayne McFarlane Jr., who was killed Jan. 9 by a roadside bomb in the town of Abu Ghari, Iraq.

Video shows kidnapped Chinese workers

Iraqi insurgents say 8 worked on U.S. projects; other reports had the men leaving Iraq

The Associated Press

BAHGHAD — Insurgents released a video Tuesday showing eight Chinese workers held hostage by gunmen who claim the men are employed by a construction company working with U.S. troops, in the latest abduction of foreigners in Iraq.

China's government confirmed the kidnappings, and the Foreign Ministry said it was "taking all measures to rescue the hostages," the official Xinhua News Agency said. The eight men from China's Fujian province went missing last week while trav-

eling to Jordan, Xinhua said.

The Chinese Embassy in Baghdad pledged that the Chinese government would spare no effort to secure the hostages' freedom, Xinhua said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said the eight hostages were ordinary Chinese citizens who went to Iraq individually seeking employment. He said they failed to find work and were leaving Iraq in a rental car when they were kidnapped.

But Xinhua reported that the men were construction workers helping to rebuild a

plant in the southern Iraqi city of Najaf.

In the video, delivered to various news organizations, the eight men appear in front of a small mud brick building and display their passports for the camera. The men are flanked by two gunmen with headscarves wrapped around their faces.

In a handwritten note delivered with the tape, an insurgent group calling itself the al-Nunayn Brigades said it abducted the men as they were on their way out of the country.

"After interrogation, we found that they are working for a Chinese construction

company that is working inside American sites in Iraq," the note said.

The note indicated the group might not go back to the work on the occupation because China did not participate in the war.

"The movement decided to free these Chinese soon on condition that they will not go back to their work on the occupation forces. And we hope the Chinese company will not deal with these forces," the message said.

Insurgents have repeatedly kidnapped foreigners in Iraq.



Nick Kenaya and his wife, Barbara, of San Diego, traveled to Irvine, Calif., on Monday, to register to vote for the first time in an Iraqi election.

AP

Iraqis in U.S. register to vote

BY GILLIAN FLACCUS

The Associated Press

IRVINE, Calif. — Nick Kenaya fled to Syria 25 years ago from his native Iraq after he refused to join the Baath Party and was sentenced to death.

On Monday, he drove about 70 miles from his home in San Diego for a chance to register to vote and help determine Iraq's future.

For that honor, he said he was willing to travel 100 times farther.

"I don't mind even going to Alaska to vote because I left Iraq as a high school teacher and there was oppression," said Kenaya, 40, whose four brothers and two sisters are still in Iraq. "This is the first time in three decades that people have that freedom."

The seven-day registration period ends Jan. 23. Voting will begin Jan. 28

and continue until the Jan. 30 election in Iraq, at a venue that will draft a constitution and choose a president.

Eligible Iraqis abroad — estimated to number 1.2 million — can vote in Britain, Australia, Sweden, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Iran, Jordan, the Netherlands, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and the United States.

About 240,000 Iraqis are eligible to vote in the United States, according to Roger Bryant of the International Center for Migration, which is in charge of the overseas voting for the Iraqi government.

Registration was possible at seven sites in and around Detroit, Los Angeles, Nashville, Chicago and Washington, D.C. Eligible voters can be American citizens, but must be 18 or older, have been born in Iraq, hold citizenship or prove that their father was Iraqi.

forcing two Iraqi detainees to undress in front of others. Cpl. Daniel Kenyon, 33, and Lance Cpl. Mark Cooley, 25, pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Italian troops training Iraqis

NASIRIYAH, Iraq — In the predominantly Shiite city of Nasiriyah, Italian troops controlling the sector said Monday they were confident they'll escape election day bloodshed. Nonetheless, they've been training Iraqi security forces to repel any attacks.

Voter turnout in southern Iraq could be crucial to ensuring the credibility of the Jan. 30 elections because violence expected in areas further north is likely to keep voters home.

From wire reports

1st AD gets early warning on probable return to Iraq

By TERRY BOYD

Stars and Stripes

BAUMHOLDER, Germany — It's back to Iraq for America's last armored division.

The Wiesbaden-based 1st Armored Division received its "deployment warning orders" last week, according to soldiers at Baumholder, home to the division's 2nd Brigade and its Division Artillery.

Several sources told Stars and Stripes that a call-up could be imminent. The division could deploy sometime between Nov. 1, 2005, and mid-January 2006. In addition, a stop-loss order will go into effect Aug. 1 for the division, according to sources.

Warning orders are informal notifications alerting personnel they could be deployed.

"Units were notified; soldiers were notified in order to let families know" that the 1st AD might deploy to Iraq, said a 1st AD official who asked not to be identified.

Division officials expect formal deployment orders to come this week from the Department of Defense, said U.S. Army officials in Germany. It is possible, though unlikely, units could receive warning orders, but never deploy.

The orders could affect as many as 10,000 soldiers at 11 1st AD bases across central Germany.

Most expected the warning order:

"It's not a big surprise," said 1st Sgt. Craig Copridge, with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment at Baumholder. The deployment to Iraq, if it happens, will be the third for Copridge, who went in Operation Desert Storm in 1991 as a sergeant and to Operation Iraqi Freedom in June 2003.

"I'm looking forward to it," Copridge said. "I just became the first sergeant, and taking the company into combat is always interesting."

Not everyone shares his enthusiasm.

"Four-two-seven took [the news] hard," said the wife of a 4th Battalion, 27th Artillery Regiment noncommissioned officer, who asked not to be identified. "It was very emotional at the [Family Readiness Group] meeting," she said, declining to comment further.

On April 29, 2003, Company C, 4-27, lost eight men in a car bomb attack, the single largest loss the division suffered during its first 01st deployment from April 2003 through July 2004.

Most of the people interviewed by Stars and Stripes rated the Army as good in keeping soldiers and officers informed about major changes before they happen.

"It helped people, helped the families to hear [the warning order] firsthand instead

of hearing it on the news," said Julie Gowel, whose husband, 1st Lt. Dave Gowel, is executive officer for Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade. "The Army is good about telling you what you need to know."

She added that it was clear the 1st AD was likely to be sent back to Iraq just because there isn't enough of the Army to go around.

All of the Army's 10 active-duty divisions have deployed at least once to either Iraq or Afghanistan since 2001, as has nearly every National Guard and reserve unit. Some units have deployed twice.

Several soldiers told Stars and Stripes they thought it would be easier the second time. The 1st AD would return to Iraq with substantial experience.

"Obviously, we don't know where we're going," Copridge said. "But based on what we learned that 15 months, we'll have a pretty good idea of what to expect."

The division's area of responsibility covered a huge swath of Baghdad during most of the first deployment, with soldiers and officers dividing their time between three main missions — raids, helping organize local governments and rebuilding efforts. After the division was extended April 16, some units moved to southern Iraq, where they helped rout Shiite militias after Iraqi security forces proved ineffective.

The 1st AD is one of two divisions forward based in Germany. The other, the 1st Infantry Division based at Würzburg, currently has most of its units in Iraq, with the bulk of troops slated to return to Germany after deployment actions in Iraq, scheduled for Jan. 30.

Coping with long deployments is one of the biggest challenges for military families.

Gowel said she stayed in Baumholder for the first deployment, but she plans to return to her family in Boston for what she expects to be another year apart.

"There's something to be said for being around people who're going through what you're going through," Gowel said of remaining in Baumholder. "It takes away the pity factor. You can't go around saying, 'Oh, woe is me!' The people around you are all in the same boat."

Going home won't be "better or worse, just different," she said. "I just don't want to do the same thing, and I felt like I missed a lot of stuff — weddings, family and career opportunities — the first time."

The old saying among Army families is that it's easier to leave than to be left behind, Gowel said. If both leave, maybe it'll be a little easier with neither left behind, she added.

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Capt. Colin Williams, left, and 1st Lt. Ed Kaspar chat over a cup of coffee in the 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery's new coffee shop at a U.S. base in Ramadi, Iraq, on Sunday.

BY JOE GIORDANO/Stars and Stripes

From mortar to mocha — almost

Bare-bones coffeehouse in Iraq still bears marks of attack

BY JOSEPH GIORDANO

Stars and Stripes

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RAMADI, Iraq — Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery Regiment have taken a near tragedy and turned it into a steaming cup of comfort.

In late October, shortly after the battalion arrived in Ramadi with the rest of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team from South Korea, a single mortar round slammed into the roof of a concrete building in their headquarters compound.

The mortar, which struck in the middle of the day, tore a gaping hole in the concrete and sent shrapnel spraying into the walls.

"Every door around here was blown open, except for the one in my office, which was already open," said 1st Lt. Ed Kaspar, recalling the attack.

Out of sheer luck, nobody was inside the building — which was used as the battalion's logistics office — when the round struck. Smoke poured from the room, soldiers recalled, and everything inside the office was destroyed.

For weeks, the office sat vacant. But now, the battalion has turned it into what might be the best-stocked coffeehouse on a U.S. base in Iraq — complete with a natural "skylight" where the mortar round hit.

Inside is a trio of salvaged leather chairs, a table

made from a wooden cable spool and a bar fashioned out of plywood. Scores of coffee packets, tea bags, coffee pots, grinders and other accessories line a pair of shelves built into the walls. A compact disc player with small speakers plays music, and a shelf above the door is piled with books.

The coffee is largely provided by soldiers who receive it in care packages from the States. The coffeehouse, like so many other small touches that U.S. servicemen have dreamed up on bases throughout Iraq, is meant to give soldiers a break from the reality of their missions. It's a far cry from an upscale coffee bar back home, but it does its job, soldiers said.

"We've gotten about 15 people a day that come in here now, but once we really get it going and get some people in here, we'll open it up to the whole brigade," said Kaspar, a 32-year-old from Oxnard, Calif.

On Sunday afternoon, Capt. Colin Williams, a 28-year-old civil affairs officer from Owego, N.Y., stopped in for a cup of coffee. Drinking from a white mug emblazoned with the words "Operation Iraqi Freedom," Williams shot the breeze with the others for a few minutes, then went back to work.

If the soldiers get their wish, the budding coffeehouse could see more improvements.

"We're hoping to get a sponsor to send us some good coffee," Kaspar said. "And our biggest hope is a cappuccino machine."

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Reports forecast a grim future for post-election Iraq

By WARREN P. STROBEL,
JONATHAN S. LANDAY
AND JOHN WALCOTT
Knight Ridder Newspapers

WASHINGTON — A series of new U.S. intelligence assessments on Iraq paints a grim picture of the road ahead and concludes that there's little likelihood that President Bush's goals can be attained in the near future.

Instead of stabilizing the country, national elections Jan. 30 are likely to be followed by more violence and could provoke a civil war between majority Shiite Muslims and minority Sunni Muslims, the CIA and other intelligence agencies predict, according to senior officials who've seen the classified reports.

A CIA spokesman, Tom Crispell, said he was unable to comment. A White House spokeswoman had no immediate comment. The federal government was closed Monday for the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

A new public report by the National Intelligence Council concludes that instead of diminishing terrorism, U.S.-occupied Iraq has replaced prewar Afghanistan as breeding and training ground for terrorists who may disperse to conduct attacks elsewhere.

Two senior intelligence officials with access to classified reporting said Islamic militants alighted or inspired by Osama bin Laden were forging ties to Iraqi nationalists and remnants of former dictator Saddam Hussein's regime. The linkage is similar to the one that so-called "Afghan Arabs" formed with Afghanistan's Taliban regime after the Soviet Union withdrew from that country, they said.

The Bush administration claimed before invading Iraq that Saddam had strong ties to interna-

tional terrorism, but most counter-terrorism experts dispute that and no evidence has been found to support the claim.

"The sad thing is we have created what the administration claimed we were intervening to prevent, an Iraqi/al-Qaeda linkage," one of the senior intelligence officials said.

The officials who were more pessimistic spoke on condition of anonymity, because the latest intelligence assessments are classified and their views are at odds with public statements from the White House.

Even in their public remarks, top military officers and policy-makers are becoming more cautious about the road ahead in Iraq.

All major U.S. intelligence agencies share a pessimistic prognosis for Iraq's future, according to a senior administration official. The assessment of the State Department's intelligence bureau is so grim that it's referred to as the "I agree with Scowcroft's analysis" report.

That's a reference to retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, who was national security adviser to Bush's father, President George H.W. Bush.

Scowcroft said earlier this month that the Iraqi elections could deepen the conflict and "we may be seeing an incipient civil war." Bush and his national security team took issue with Scowcroft's remarks, but the pessimistic indicators have led a growing number of senior U.S. military and intelligence officials to say they worry that the mission in Iraq is becoming untenable for the American military.

The reports, also by the CIA and the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency, were discussed at a recent U.S. intelligence community conference.

A hero's welcome for former warlord

BY KEVIN DOUGHERTY

Stars and Stripes

HERAT, Afghanistan — The heart of Herat came home to a hero's welcome Tuesday, with upward of 2,000 people and a small detachment of U.S. soldiers on hand to greet him.

"When he left for Kabul two months ago," Col. Randy Smith said of the send-off for Ismail Khan, "the crowd treated him like he was a rock star."

Smith, head of the Regional Command Area Group-West, had planned to drive south to Shindand with Maj. Gen. Abdul Wahab Walizada, who commands the Afghan National Army's 20th Corps. The two wanted to check the progress of some new Afghan recruits and their U.S. trainers.

But when word spread Monday night that Khan was returning to Herat to celebrate the Muslim festival of Eid, Walizada had to back out. While Khan has some detractors in western Afghanistan, he remains the most popular figure on this side of the country.

"You can see the crowd outside the airport," Afghan army Brig. Gen. Fazil Ahmad Sayar, the corps' chief of staff said through an interpreter. "They are ready for I.K."

That's how people in the region refer to Khan, a former warlord who, after some reluctance, agreed to support the transitional government. Khan now runs the Ministry of Water and Electricity in Kabul.

Smith and his men didn't come to provide security; the

ANA was taking care of that. They came to support Walizada, and possibly meet Khan.

A company of 120 Afghan soldiers managed to keep well-wishers at bay, allowing them to crowd around the perimeter of the tarmac.

Several of them clutched portraits and bumper stickers of their magnetic leader, a man who helped to drive the former Soviet Union out of Afghanistan.

"Long life for I.K.," one young follower repeatedly shouted as he led a group chant.

Off to the side stood a dozen young girls dressed in ceremonial outfits. They sang traditional Afghan songs, while elder women clutched in burkas stood by like nervous state mothers.

When Khan's airplane landed and taxied up to the terminal, the



KEVIN DOUGHERTY/Stars and Stripes

A group of Afghan girls sing in support of local hero Ismail Khan, a former warlord who now heads the Ministry of Water and Electricity, in his hometown of Herat on Tuesday.

men swarmed it. Confetti flew and the men jostled to get a better view. Before long, Khan was riding in a motorcade heading to his house for a weekend of celebration.

"I am hopeful for Afghanistan,"

Sayar said. "We are looking for a new generation to take the lead."

On this day, however, the youth were no match for a star named Khan.

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'Stan' nations discuss drugs, terrorism

By CHARLIE COON

Stars and Stripes

GARMISCH, Germany — The five "Stans" — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — aren't new as neighbors but they are new at working together.

The young democracies, established after the former Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, are strategically located to their south are Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran; to their east, China, and to their north, Russia. Including Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Stans area is about three-fourths the size of the continental United States with a population of 230 million.

Last week, leaders from the five countries met at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies to discuss fighting terrorism and stopping drug trafficking. Also on the agenda were causes of instability in the region and the roles of security forces.

"Each are long-term problems that won't lend themselves to easy and quick solutions," said Army Lt. Gen. David Barno, com-



CHARLIE COON/Stars and Stripes

Army Lt. Gen. David Barno, commander of Combined Forces Command in Afghanistan, gives closing remarks Thursday at the Central and South Asian States Regional Security Conference in Garmisch, Germany.

mander of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, which organized the conference along with the Marshall Center.

"They need to look at the whole picture, not the one-country-at-a-time picture," Barno said.

The Marshall Center was founded in 1993 by the U.S. and German Defense departments and hosts conferences and classes designed to help former Soviet-bloc nations establish their independence.

More than 90 delegates — most-

ly defense and foreign affairs ministers, diplomats and their deputies — came to the conference. Remarks were translated into English, Russian and Dari and kept off the record so delegates could speak freely.

Representatives from Afghanistan and Pakistan also attended.

It was hoped the meetings would help the nations move past historical divisions and think as a region, according to Roger D. Kangas, who holds a doctorate and is professor of Central Asian Studies at the center.

Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of poppy, the plant from which heroin is made. But more than half of Afghanistan's heroin is transferred through the Stans on its way to dealers and users in the West, according to Lt. Col. Thomas Mergel of the German army and the Marshall Center.

"And transfer countries become consumer countries," Mergel said.

One suggestion that came out of the conference, he said, was for nations to assign liaison officers to work with each other to address drug trafficking.

The group had met twice before, in March 2003 in Kyrgyzstan and February 2004 in Uzbekistan. This, however, was the first time that Afghanistan and Pakistan were invited.

"The time was simply not right to invite them [before]," Mergel said. "But they are facing the same problems, so they should be part of the solution."

"You want to make progress, so it's not time to exclude a single country."

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AF extending Guam tours

By LISA BURGESS

Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — Beginning next January, the Air Force's accompanied tours in Guam will change from 24 to 36 months, and unaccompanied tours will go from 15 to 24 months.

The extensions make the assignment a long tour versus a short tour for Air Force personnel, according to a servicemember message about the change sent out this week by the Air Force's Office of Personnel at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas.

Airmen who report to Guam before Dec. 31 will continue to receive short-tour credit, while those reporting on or after Jan. 1 will

serve the long tour and subsequently receive long-tour credit, the message says.

The number of personnel the tour changes will affect was not available by press time.

Air Force leaders repeatedly have mentioned Guam as a possible permanent base should Pacific Air Forces expand in the region, touting its strategic placement 1,300 miles from the Korean peninsula and a similar distance from the Taiwan Straits.

But the Air Force has yet to establish a permanent wing on the island.

Andersen Air Force Base on Guam was used as a temporary base for B-1 and B-52 bombers when tensions with North Korea began to rise in 2003, and airmen continue to be stationed on the island to maintain the sprawling facility.

The Navy, meanwhile, changed from short-term to long-term status for its shore-based Guam assignments on Oct. 12, according to Sharon Anderson, a spokeswoman in the Navy's personnel office.

The sea service has three submarines stationed on Guam, which began arriving in 2002: the USS San Francisco, the USS City of Corpus Christi and the USS Houston.

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Naples sailors get opportunity to show off new test uniforms

By SANDRA JONTZ

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Milan. Paris. New York. Naval Support Activity Naples.

OK, so the conference room of the Cape Tower doesn't have a famous catwalk, and the clothing isn't quite *haute couture*. But it was a bit of fashion nonetheless for Petty Officer 2nd Class Shanta Prince, who volunteered to test-wear samples of what could become the new Navy service uniform.

"Anything that has to do with fashion, I'm there," said the 24-year-old information systems technician stationed at Naval Support Activity Naples as she strutted in her polyester-wool blend gray blouse and black skirt at the Capodichino Tower conference room on Tuesday.

NSA Naples, along with 11 other Navy facilities worldwide, are the test sites for the new uniform prototypes. About 600 sailors from around the world will be testing service and utility uniforms for durability, comfort, ease and overall appearance.

Naples sailors are testing the service uniforms. "I like them already. Look, pants that actually fit," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Allany Gaylor, a petite 22-year-old, size 4 or 6 air traffic controller who still shops for clothing in the kiddie/teen section.

Each of the 12 Navy test sites has ponied up about 50 sailors who make up what's been dubbed, "Task Force Uniform" to decide the new uniforms for E-6s and below.

For the next six months, the sailors will take notes on a number of options, such as whether they prefer the 75 percent polyester/25 percent hand washable uniforms over the 55 percent/45 percent dry-clean-only combination, whether they would rather have rating badges on their sleeves or on their collars; and if they'd rather wear the gray blouse/black bottom combination over the khaki/black look.

Participants will give their opinions in two Web-based surveys, one midway through the six-month trial period and one at the end, said Ken Jackson, a textile technologist at Navy Clothing and Textile Research Facility in Natick, Mass.

After a small fashion show Thursday of the new uniform designs, sailors at Naval Station Rota, Spain, will start test-wearing the utility versions next week, said base spokeswoman Lt. Allie Free-



SANDRA JONTZ/Stars and Stripes

Ken Jackson, left, a textile technologist with the Navy Clothing and Textile Research Facility in Massachusetts, checks the waistline on Petty Officer 2nd Class Jermaine Kelley, 25 and a postal clerk at Naval Support Activity Naples, Italy.

man. About 50 Rota sailors will test four proposed designs, including two sets with digitally created camouflage and two sets with standard markings.

"It fits pretty good," Petty Officer 2nd Class Jermaine Kelley, 25, said moments after stepping into a gray-black service uniform. The postal clerk at Naples said he digs the color. "It takes some getting used to, but I think it fits the Navy better. Our ships are gray."

Comfort is key for Petty Officer 2nd Class Caleb Hunter, 24, who also gave an initial approval.

"I haven't had it on long, but it seems comfortable, more comfortable than [our current uniforms] so far," said an aviation machinist mate. "The [gray] color is all right, but we care more for comfortability, not color."

Staff writer Ben Murray contributed to this report from Rota, Spain.

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IN THE WORLD

U.N. meets to discuss tsunami aftermath

BY CHARLES J. HANLEY
The Associated Press

KOBE, Japan — In the wake of an ocean wave that hurled an unready world, hundreds of U.N. conference delegates Tuesday got down to the business of finding ways to give battle more of an edge in an age-old fight with the worst of nature.

"We must draw and act on every lesson we can," U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan told participants in the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, which opened with a moment of silence for more than 160,000 people killed in the Dec. 26 earthquake-tsunami that ravaged coasts across south Asia.

"The world looks to this conference to help make communities and nations more resilient in the face of natural disasters," Annan said in his videotaped message.

The first day's agenda for the five-day meeting focused on routes to resilience by protecting such critical facilities as hospitals and power plants against damage; building earthquake-safe structures; and bolstering communications systems, among others.

The Japanese government announced it would refocus its foreign aid program to put more emphasis on disaster reduction. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, addressing the conference, also said his government would offer tsunami-warning training to countries struck by the powerful, earthquake-spawned wave that sped across the Indian Ocean last month.

An immediate conference goal is to lay the foundation for an Indian Ocean alert network like the one on guard for tsunamis in the



Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi gives the host country statement Tuesday at the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan.

Pacific. UNESCO is presenting a blueprint for a system of deep-water buoys, tide gauges and a regional alert center that would cost \$30 million and go into operation by mid-2006. Several sessions here will deal with the practicalities of the plan.

"Rarely has a tragedy made a conference so topical and timely as this one," Annan said.

His U.N. emergency coordinator, Jan Egelund, told reporters he hopes governments and U.N. agencies will make a "strong commitment" here to establish the Indian Ocean system. He also said he believed that over the next 10 years all vulnerable populations will be covered by advance warning systems.

Beyond the "hardware," Egelund said, children should be educated to the risks of disasters; hospitals, clinics and schools should be viewed as safe havens and built to withstand quakes, cyclones and other disasters; and all disaster-prone countries should adopt "action plans" to deal with the threats.

The conference convened in Kobe 10 years after much of this Japanese port city was devastated in a great earthquake that killed 6,400 people. Japanese officials have cited this country's experience with natural disasters as an example for other nations.

The conference has drawn some 4,000 delegates and other participants from 150 countries.

U.N. lifts travel ban on aid workers in Indonesia

BY BURT HERMAN
The Associated Press

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia — The United Nations on Tuesday lifted a travel ban on aid workers in Indonesia's tsunami-battered Aceh province, the scene of a decades-long conflict between rebels and government forces that has raised concerns about the safety of relief efforts.

As aid work picked up speed in worst-hit Aceh province, even war-torn Afghanistan joined in the relief efforts, sending a 20-strong team including 12 military doctors who departed Kabul for Indonesia with medical equipment, blankets and dried fruit.

The United Nations imposed a 24-hour travel ban on its staff in parts of Aceh on Monday following reports that fighting had broken out between insurgents and the Indonesian army.

U.N. security consultant Werner Van den Berg said the world body decided not to renew the ban after speaking with Indonesian police in the coastal city of Lhoksaumawe about reporting fighting there.

Col. Nachrowi Dzuairi, a spokesman for the Indonesian military in Banda Aceh, said he had received reports of a rebel attack on the road that apparently sparked Monday's fears, but had few further details.

The Free Aceh Movement rebels, who have been fighting for autonomy for the province since 1976, have dismissed Indonesian government allegations they would attack relief convoys to steal food for fighters.

Other aid groups and foreign troops helping in the mammoth relief effort in Aceh said they were working as normal, and a U.S. military spokesman said American forces did not believe the security situation had changed in recent days.

"We're coordinating our force protection measures with the Indonesian government and taking appropriate security measures," U.S. Marine Capt. Joe Plenzler said. "We've been doing that since the start, it's nothing new."

Capt. Matt Klunder, Naval Air Wing 2 deputy commander, said U.S. helicopters were flying about 80 daily missions to Aceh. He said the desperation those deliveries aid witnessed in the first days after the disaster, when villagers often mobbed helicopters as soon as they touched down, had largely abated.

"Now there's a little more confidence because they know that on a somewhat regular basis we can get them foodstuffs and water," he said.

Associated Press writers Jim Gomez, Beth Gardiner and Michael Casey in Banda Aceh contributed to this report.

Europe 'reaches for stars' with Airbus' superjumbo jet

BY LAURENCE FROST
The Associated Press

TOULOUSE, France — Airbus showed off its giant A380, a double-deck behemoth that could revolutionize long-haul flying, at a lavish ceremony Tuesday with European leaders gathered for the first official look at the world's largest passenger plane.

Airbus is betting its newfound status as the world's leading jet maker on the "superjumbo" that has an 262-foot wingspan, a tail as tall as a seven-story building and cost billion \$13 billion to develop.

The leaders of France, Britain, Germany and Spain — Airbus' government backers — and CEOs from the 14 airlines and freight transporters that have ordered A380s attended the elaborate ceremony at company headquarters in Toulouse, southern France.

"We may have reached for the stars... but as far as the aeronautical industry is concerned we caught some of those stars," said German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who called the A380 a "triumph of European science and European engineering."

French President Jacques Chirac said "this veritable liner of the skies will mark aviation history," while British Prime Minister Tony Blair praised the A380 as the "only commercial plane designed from the outset to minimize the impact on the envi-



Airbus employees throw their caps in the air next to the new Airbus A380 on Tuesday after its unveiling ceremony, near Toulouse, southwestern France. The A380 double-deck superjumbo jet is the world's largest passenger plane.

ronment." The show before almost 5,000 guests included music, clouds of dry ice and dancers in the A380 assembly hangar, one of the largest enclosed spaces in Europe.

The A380's launch seemed certain to become a milestone in civil aviation history

alongside the 747 and Concorde. Unlike the supersonic Concorde, however, whose claim to fame was how fast it crossed the Atlantic, this latest fruit of European aerospace cooperation will ultimately be judged on how fast it makes money.

Airbus already has 149 orders for the

\$280 million plane, "which for a plane of this size that has not yet flown is an extraordinary commercial performance," CEO Noel Forgeard said.

Airbus says companies have options on dozens more and that the program will break even after 250 sales — an objective it hopes to reach within three years.

"At the end of the day, the A380 will be a very successful airplane," said Jan Ash, president of InterVISTAS-ga2, a Washington-based aviation consulting firm.

Ash said the A380 will be an enticing aircraft for carriers on long-haul, high-density markets, whereas the 747 will be a "viable alternative" to other carriers.

Airbus hopes to sell 750 superjumbos to airlines operating services between the busiest airports, mainly in Asia, which serve as hubs, or stopovers between connecting flights.

In a three-class cabin layout, the A380 will carry 555 passengers — 33 percent more than the 747. The A380 has 49 percent more floor space — leaving additional room for features such as on-board shops, bars, casinos or even nurseries.

Singapore Airlines will begin using the plane for services to London and Sydney when it becomes the first carrier to carry commercial passengers aboard the A380 in mid-2006, Chew Choon Seng, CEO of Singapore Airlines, said.

2 million Muslims travel to Saudi Arabia for hajj

BY ADNAN MALIK
The Associated Press

JIDDAH, Saudi Arabia — Chanting, "Oh Allah I'm here," pilgrims draped in white garments began streaming into the tent city of Mina to take part in rituals symbolizing the life of their 7th century prophet.

Two million people travel to the holy cities in Saudi Arabia each year to participate in the hajj pilgrimage, which Muslims believe cleanses the soul and wipes away sins. Over 50,000 security forces have been deployed in response to terrorism fears and to prevent stampeding and other problems that have plagued the annual hajj in recent years.

"I feel so enlightened and so much closer to Allah that I can barely wait to stand on the mountain of mercy," said Afzal Sikandar Khan, 45, a pilgrim from India, referring to Mount Arafat, recognized as the place where the Prophet Muhammad delivered his last sermon.

Many pilgrims remain concerned about numerous hazards such as stampedes and fires that have killed hundreds of pilgrims in recent years.

"I will pray for the tsunami victims, but my immediate concern is that Allah enables us to complete our pilgrimage safe and sound," said Saudi doctor Mokhtar Ahmed, 30.

In addition to the burden of hosting 2 million visitors, Saudi authorities have ex-

pressed concerns about terrorism and the spread of diseases.

The kingdom has mobilized counterterrorism squads and set up medical centers to treat sick pilgrims.

The site of the stoning ritual where pilgrims have been stampeded has been developed to smooth the flow of pilgrims. A stampede last year left 244 pilgrims dead and another in 1990 killed 1,426 people.

The pilgrims begin the rituals by first circling the Kaaba, a large stone structure that Muslims face during their five daily prayers. They then continue to spend a night in the tent city of Mina, and head the next day to pray at Mount Arafat, the central rite of the pilgrimage.

The pilgrims later head to Muzdalifah, where they collect pebbles overnight, and throw pebbles the next day at three pillars symbolizing the devil. Many pilgrims then shave or trim their hair as a symbol of rebirth.

A camel, sheep or cow is slaughtered the day after the hajj to mark the beginning of Eid al-Adha, or the Feast of the Sacrifice.

More than a million sheep have been imported for slaughter.

Saudi Arabia has set up a mammoth tent city in Mina, with more than 40,000 white, fireproof tents to house the pilgrims. Dozens of trucks will roam the streets, offering food and drink.

Dozens of fire engines will be on standby



A pilgrim talks on his mobile phone at the Great Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on Monday. More than two million Muslims will spend Tuesday night in Mina before heading to Arafat on Wednesday for the main day of the annual pilgrimage.

in the city surrounded by colossal mountains. High winds in 1997 swept fire through a sprawling tent city for pilgrims, killing more than 340 and injuring 1,500.

The pilgrimage is required of able-bodied Muslims at least once in a lifetime, if they can afford it. Pilgrims travel to the cities of Mecca, Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifah.

Report: Cars go unchecked

MONTREAL, Quebec — More than a dozen cars have barreled through a major Canada-U.S. border crossing in the last six weeks without being stopped by Canadian authorities, according to a news report.

A total of 18 vehicles sped unchecked through the Lacolle crossing 30 miles south of Montreal between Dec. 7 and Jan. 2, the Radio-Canada television network reported Monday, citing numbers compiled by Customs agents.

Customs spokesman Dominic McNeely dismissed the report and insisted security at the Lacolle crossing remains tight.

36 arrested in drug sting

ROME — Italian police arrested 31 people Tuesday in a crackdown on a crime ring they say smuggled cocaine and hashish from Spain to Italy.

Police in Lanciano, central Italy, made the arrests before dawn while searching apartments in the area with the help of sniffer dogs and a helicopter. Police there said at least six of those arrested were South American.

In a separate case, police in the northern Italian city of Padova said they made five arrests and seized 48 pounds of cocaine and hashish when searching a car on the outskirts of the city Sunday.

Pope, Jewish leaders meet

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II called for renewed commitment to stronger dialogue between Jews and Catholics as he warmly received more than 100 Jewish leaders, rabbis, cantors and their family members Tuesday in what was described as the largest such Vatican audience with Jewish representatives.

From The Associated Press

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IN THE STATES

Rice faces critics at confirmation hearing



Secretary of State-designate Condoleezza Rice testifies on Capitol Hill on Tuesday before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on her nomination.

BY ANNE GEARAN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State nominee Condoleezza Rice told senators on Tuesday that a U.S. exit strategy from Iraq is "directly proportional" to Iraq's ability to defend itself against terrorists after this month's elections.

Stepping out from her largely behind-the-scenes role as President Bush's national security adviser, Rice said she could not give Congress a timetable for American disengagement.

"The goal is to get the mission accomplished," she said. "We're right now focused on security for the [Jan. 30] election."

Rice told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that spreading democracy through the Middle East remains a top administration foreign-policy objective.

The Palestinian election earlier this month following the death of Yasser Arafat offers "a moment of opportuni-

ty," Rice said. But Rice also said Palestinian leaders need to do more to end acts of terrorism against Israel, saying peace hopes will be dashed if such violence continues.

She raised the possibility that Bush might name an envoy to the Palestinians, but said timing was an issue. "No one has objections in principle" to such an envoy, she said, but Rice added that "it is a question over whether that is appropriate" at this time.

Rice pledged Tuesday to work to mend and strengthen ties with allies frayed by Iraq. "The time for diplomacy is now," she told senators at her hearing to replace Colin Powell as secretary of state.

"The time for diplomacy is long overdue," retorted Sen. Joseph Biden, the senior Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He told her the United States is "paying a heavy price" for the administration's policy in Iraq.

Despite pointed questioning from Biden and other committee Democrats, Senate confirmation of Rice —

Bush's most trusted foreign policy confidante — was all but assured.

Rice insisted that the administration's actions in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks — including wars in Afghanistan and Iraq — were "difficult, and necessary and right."

"If I am confirmed, public diplomacy will be a top priority for me and for the professionals I lead," Rice said in an apparent attempt to ease concerns of those who suggested Bush's foreign policy was too unilateral and unaccommodating over the past four years.

Rice was closely grilled on the situation in Iraq, where violence by insurgents continues with just under two weeks to go to elections there.

Biden said the administration must "level with the American people" over an exit strategy and whether U.S. troop levels there are adequate.

"I would not presume to try to give the president military advice, but I do believe that he got good military advice and I do believe that the plan and the forces that we went in with were appropriate to the task," she said.

Arctic temperatures take toll on Northeast

BY BEN DOBBIN
The Associated Press

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — A deep Arctic freeze refused to relinquish its grip over the Northeast and Midwest early Tuesday, keeping teeth chattering and temperatures at bone-chilling lows.

At least three weekend deaths were blamed on the cold in Michigan.

After a relatively mild winter in the Northeast, brisk winds made it feel as cold as minus-20 degrees in western New York and minus-45 degrees in the Adirondacks in northern New York.

"To some people this is quite a shock, but much of our hardy up-state population is used to this. They knew it would come eventually," Buffalo's chief meteorologist, Tom Niziol, said Monday.

Cold air rushing over Lake Ontario and Lake Erie produced as much as 14 inches of snowfall in ski-resort communities in western and central New York.

The cold blast will extend through Tuesday, with temperatures spiking as high as 30 degrees Wednesday. "Then we go back into a deep freeze for the end of the week with temperatures not making it out of the teens," Niziol said.

Temperatures were well below normal Tuesday across Michigan, the National Weather Service said. Detroit Metropolitan Airport, where the normal low is 17 degrees, had an early Tuesday reading of 1 degree.

The frozen body of Kathryn Jeanne Gates was found in Minneapolis on Sunday morning, hours after her motorized scooter tipped over and she was unable to get back up, police said. Overnight temperatures were below zero. An autopsy was planned for Tuesday to determine the cause of death.

In Michigan's Wayne County, a man in his 50s who was believed to be homeless was found frozen to death Sunday in a grassy area



Don Kozak uses a snowblower to clear his driveway Monday in North Kingsville, Ohio. An Arctic freeze is blanketing an area reaching from the Northeast down to north Florida — where temperatures were in the high 20s Tuesday morning.

near a sidewalk.

In Oceana County in western Michigan, a 24-year-old man and a 19-year-old woman were found dead Saturday, apparently from carbon monoxide from a propane

heater used to heat a trailer.

The chill was felt as far south as Florida, where low temperatures Tuesday morning were reported in the high 20s and low 30s for northern Florida.

U.S. citizen pleads guilty to oil-for-food conspiracy

BY CURT ANDERSON
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An Iraqi-American businessman pleaded guilty Tuesday to charges that he received payments from Iraq to illegally act as its agent in the United States, including getting millions of dollars worth of oil from the United Nations' oil-for-food program.

Samir A. Vincent, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Annandale, Va., entered the guilty pleas in federal court in New York to four criminal counts, including conspiring to act as an unregistered agent of a foreign government and tax violations, according to Attorney General John Ashcroft.

Vincent faces up to 28 years in prison.

The charges against Vincent are the first to arise from multiple investigations of the oil-for-food program, which the U.N. operated from 1996 to 2003 while Iraq was subjected to international sanctions imposed after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The program allowed Saddam to export oil under U.N. oversight and use the proceeds to purchase food, medicine and other humanitarian items.

According to court papers in Vincent's case, between 1992 and 2003 Vincent worked closely with Saddam's government in an effort to persuade U.S. and U.N. officials to repeal those economic sanctions and on matters related to admission of U.N. weapons inspectors to Iraq. He was also involved in the drafting of the oil-for-food program, including agreements guaranteeing himself and others "millions of dollars in compensation."

Supreme Court sidesteps Guantanamo case

BY GINA HOLLAND
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Tuesday dodged a dispute over the government's plans to conduct military trials for Osama bin Laden's former driver and other foreign terror suspects, avoiding another clash over the president's powers.

Justices were asked to decide if the Bush administration is trying to shortcut the rights of non-Americans facing trials at the Guantanamo Bay Navy base in Cuba. They declined, without comment.

The court's intervention would have been unusual because an appeals court also is con-

sidering the issue and has scheduled arguments March 8. Lawyers for Salim Ahmed Hamdan — a Yemeni charged with conspiracy to commit war crimes, murder and terrorism — tried to speed things up by bypassing that court and filing the Supreme Court appeal.

About 550 detainees from 40 countries are being held as enemy combatants at Guantanamo Bay. So far only four detainees, including Hamdan, have been charged. The Bush administration had been accused by civil rights groups of doing too little to ensure the planned trials are fair.

At issue in the latest case was the government's strategy in holding special military trials, in which defendants do not have the same rights as those in regular courts.

A federal court judge had blocked the first trial and told the government to redo the plans to ensure defendants have more rights.

Also on Tuesday, the Supreme Court declined to review an Air Force lieutenant's criminal conviction for having sex with a 15-year-old boy, which the officer contended was protected by a previous court decision overruling state statutes that criminalized gay sex.

Justices, without comment, rejected the appeal by Second Lt. Ryan W. Davis. He pleaded guilty to consensual sodomy and conduct unbecoming to an officer in military court following an April 1997 meeting with a boy at a park in Gulf Breeze, Fla.

President Bush has 'a big agenda in mind'

BY NEDRA PICKLER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As President Bush prepares to take office for a second term this week, he says he is worried that people "kind of write me off" before he can get things done.

Bush said Monday he has "a big agenda in mind," which includes his campaign promises to overhaul Social Security and the legal liability system; improve the tax code, school standards and the budget process; and

make health care accessible to more Americans.

He acknowledges that four years is not a lot of time to get it all done but says he hopes Republicans and Democrats can unite now that all of his campaigns are behind him.

"The good news is I'm not running again, so maybe politics won't creep in quite as fast," he told CBS News during a round of network interviews Monday afternoon. "We got to get moving and get some things done before — before people kind of write me off."

Bush said unity across party lines will be the most important message in his inaugural address.

"I have a responsibility to try to unite this country to achieve big things for all Americans," Bush told ABC News. "I will say that in my inaugural address. I'm looking forward to the challenge."

Before the president delivers his State of the Union address, Iraqis will hold the first elections for their new government, but turnout is expected to be limited by the threat of violence at the polls. Bush said the elections are prov-

ing to be "a little bumpy," but the fact that they are being held at all is a success.

"The fact that there's a vote is fantastic," Bush told NBC News.

"I think having a vote is important to them. They're staying away because of fear, not because they don't want to vote," he said. "This is just step one of a series of important steps toward an emergence of a democratic Iraq, and America will be more secure in the long run."

Asked on the "Today" show whether it would be more diffi-

cult now to launch a pre-emptive attack against a country deemed to represent a threat, Bush said, "We hope we don't have to. But if we had to, to protect America, you know if all else failed and we needed force to protect the citizens of the United States, I would do so. But my hope is we never have to do that again."

One possibility that Iraq could pose such a threat with a nuclear weapons capability, the president said, "I hope we can solve it diplomatically but I will never take any option off the table."

New presidential wheels



GENERAL MOTORS/AP

This 2006 Cadillac DTS Presidential Limousine will make its debut Thursday during President Bush's inaugural parade. President Bush will preview Cadillac's newest model when he takes the traditional ride down Pennsylvania Avenue in his second inaugural parade. GM, whose luxury Cadillac brand has provided transportation for numerous presidents, will introduce the actual production model of the DTS at next month's Chicago Auto Show.

Command post brings 50 agencies together on inaugural security

BY CURT ANDERSON

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Far from the Capitol building where President Bush will take the oath of office, dozens of officials from 50 federal, state and local agencies will work side by side in a high-tech command center keeping close tabs on the security situation for the first presidential inauguration since the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

At 120 work stations in the northern Virginia center and using giant video screens, law enforcement and security personnel will be able to watch from cameras that monitor downtown Washington streets, keep track of aerial surveillance flights and check sensors scanning for evidence of deadly biological or chemical agents.

"If there is a piece of technology that exists, we've put it to use for this event," said Jim Rice, the FBI supervisory agent for Thursday's inauguration.

For the first time, all the federal agencies that deal with security, law enforcement and crisis response will be housed in a single Joint Field Office. Also new for this presidential inauguration, federal agencies will be under the command of a "principal federal official" reporting directly to Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge.

For this event, that officer is Tim Koerner, a top deputy in the State Service, which is the lead agency for the inaugural security effort.

The idea is to improve coordination among the various federal agencies, especially if there is a terrorist attack or other major disruption and there is an immediate need for such things as medical attention for casualties, hostage rescue or SWAT teams and investigative specialists such as FBI bomb technicians.

Law enforcement officials say that locating all officials under one roof will eliminate confusion and duplication, as well as enable them to a quickly determine whether there's a real threat or problem or if it's just a false alarm.

"When an incident first happens, in the first 30 minutes, probably about 75 percent of the information you get is wrong," Rice said. "Being able to look the guy in the eye that you're talking to, that eliminates a lot of problems."

The field office will command Coast Guard cutters and helicopters, canine bomb-sniffing units, customs aircraft, bicycle patrols, crowd control and a host of other security and law enforcement assets.

Immigration, terrorism and criminal databases will be closely watched for any suspicious matches of people arriving in the United States or placed under arrest somewhere in the country. Commercial air traffic will be watched closely.

The centralized command center should also help with the roughly 2,000 out-of-town police officers — the largest group of reinforcements ever brought in for the swearing-in — who began arriving in Washington on Tuesday to aid the inauguration.

The Washington Post reported that officers are coming from 85 law enforcement agencies, large and small, including volunteers from Los Angeles; Seattle; Charleston, W.Va.; and Burlington, Texas. Most will be stationed along the parade route or at other high-profile events.

Authorities traditionally seek help from outside agencies for the inauguration. But this time, the security demands were heightened because this is the first inauguration since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The outside officers will join about 4,000 personnel from the D.C. police force, U.S. Capitol Police, U.S. Park Police and other agencies — forming an unprecedented security net.

Despite all the preparation, U.S. officials say they have no indications that al-Qaida or any other terror group intends to attack Bush's inauguration. If anything, officials have been saying that terrorist "chatter" picked up in intelligence channels about potential attacks is at a low point compared with previous major events.

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Keep Arctic wildlife refuge free of oil drilling

Doonesbury

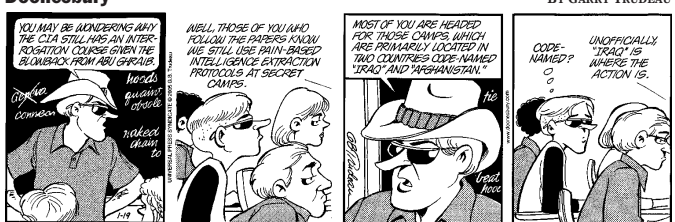
all when it comes to experience, but one law or regulation governs all, regardless of the amount of experience we have. Whatever is asked of our soldiers, we should not feel we are exempt because of the amount of experience we have. We as leaders should be ready to follow the same orders.

Spc. John A. Griggs
Camp Bucca, Iraq

So if opening the refuge is not a high priority for these oil companies, why is it for some members of Congress? The amount of oil that can be extracted from the refuge is not going to solve the nation's energy

Why do that when it isn't necessary and when even those who would make the footprint don't seem particularly interested in doing so?

Doonesbury



OPINION

No-nothing nostalgia limits Social Security

It's telling that those who want to keep Social Security just as it can only offer the same old excuse: "There's no crisis." This rationale for rejecting the use of private investment accounts as part of Social Security reform comes from people who call themselves "progressive," no less.

What their call for inaction really tells us is that they're visionless reactionaries.

They can only see modest changes to Social Security in reaction to a "crisis." So they'll wait it out, even though there are huge problems ahead for this entitlement program for retirees.

True, Social Security isn't bankrupt — just yet. In as little as 13 years, by 2018, when the bulk of my baby boom generation finally retires, Social Security reserves no longer are expected to be building up the system. By 2042 or maybe 2052, Social Security would no longer have the trust-fund assets to cover retiree benefits because the ratio of workers to retirees keeps narrowing.

Of course, those projections are conservative. They undercut the growth in immigrants, as compared to today's reality, ignoring how immigrants can pump up the work force to help pay for retirees' benefits. They also play down the potential for strong economic growth overall in the future.

Another valid point: If the government would stop borrowing from the plan's "trust fund" surplus — remember Al Gore's "lock box"? — to cover the cost of a slew of programs and all of those Bush

tax cuts, Social Security would be healthy years longer. That argument, though, ignores the bigger issue of what Social Security should be in the 21st century.

Bottom line: Americans are being short-changed. Social Security can be much more than it is today. That's what Democrats should be looking at achieving. Instead, they simply want to protect a program out of some kind of misplaced nostalgia for what it meant to be "progressive" in FDR's day.

There's no dispute that Social Security, fashioned under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, is a compact with the elderly and has done more to help retirees keep a decent, though fast-eroding, standard of living than anything else. Coupled with Medicare's health insurance benefits, Social Security has helped people over 65 keep their dignity. And those fortunate enough to have worked in companies that offer pensions, or to have earned enough to invest in markets, get extra "wiggles" to enjoy their golden years — thanks to Social Security.

Yet Social Security could stand some major tinkering. It was fashioned during another time for another world. Today's global economy demands a new look at a system that's barely keeping up with inflationary pressures for those who count on it as their only retirement income.

Politically speaking, no administration or Congress in the future would let Social Security go bankrupt. They would be voted out of office. So in a sense, the word "crisis" is a loaded political term that President Bush employs precisely because he knows the political odds are that change will come only in reaction to a crisis — not because of needed-for forward-thinking.

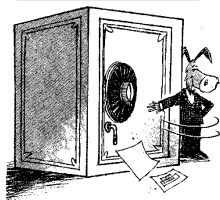
It's a shame that Bush has opted to use such disingenuous language to move the debate on Social Security forward. Both

The DEMOCRATS' 2-STEP PLAN TO SAVE SOCIAL SECURITY...

1. CREATE A LOCK BOX



2. INSERT BUSH



sides exaggerate for their own purposes.

The reality is Social Security reforms will require tough decisions about delaying retirement age, cutting back on benefits for those who choose to use a portion of their payroll taxes for investments and sticking tough to the promise that if markets tank, individual investors who opt out of a portion of Social Security won't get bailed out by Big Brother. And the cost of transferring to a private system, even if the reform only allows workers to invest a small percentage of their payroll taxes, can't be whitewashed. Whatever money workers take out of the system for investments will have to be made up by government in the short term to ensure that current retirees' benefits continue.

The goal of allowing future generations to use part of their Social Security payroll

taxes for private investment accounts is a worthy pursuit. How that's done is what should matter.

It should be a system that helps the poorest workers make wiser decisions about investments and not just a system that serves the rich and middle class, who are familiar with investing. Otherwise, we would be stealing the hopes of low-income workers to make the rich richer.

That's unacceptable. I'm no Chicken Little on Social Security reform. Never have been. Nor do I cry wolf, as Bush is doing, on the current system's viability.

The point is, we can do better for future generations — if only politicians on both sides have the gumption to dream big but tell it straight.

Myriam Marquez is an editorial-page columnist for The Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel.

Ruling returned some sanity to federal sentencing

The (Baltimore) Sun

In the federal court system, few issues have been more contentious than the sentencing guidelines that Congress passed in the mid-1980s, ostensibly to make sure that criminal defendants received about the same time for the same crime.

But federal judges have long complained that the guidelines robbed them of their discretion in weighing different circumstances that might pertain to similar crimes. And defendants and their attorneys complained of onerous sentences that could not be altered. Now, the U.S. Supreme Court has restored some measure of sanity into the process. While the decision last Wednesday is complex, the overall result is welcome.

The guidelines, which went into effect in 1987, were meant to address wide disparities in sentencing, including among different racial and ethnic groups. They also aimed to make sentences more transparent and uniform. But as time passed, Congress kept adding layers to the system, allowing sentences to become more excessive and even Draconian.

As a practical matter, power shifted from judges, who are meant to be neutral, to prosecutors, who could virtually determine the outcome of a case by the charges they set. The entire process became more and more convoluted as well, making the sentencing guidelines resemble the tax code.

And the results were still unfair. That

was ultimately the court's view in the cases decided last week. Freddie J. Booker was convicted by a Madison, Wis., jury of possessing to distribute more than 50 grams of crack cocaine. After considering his criminal history and evidence at a post-trial hearing that he had actually distributed more than 500 grams, the judge increased what would have been a sentence of nearly 22 years, based on the jury's findings, to 30 years. Similarly, Dacan Fanning was convicted by a jury in Portland, Maine, of distributing 500 grams of cocaine. Based on the jury's findings, his maximum sentence should have been 6½ years in prison. When the gov-

ernment pushed for a longer sentence, based on evidence at a post-trial hearing that he was responsible for distributing even more drugs and that he was an organizer of criminal activity, the judge refused.

That the guidelines allowed judges to increase sentences based on evidence that the jury did not consider, and under a standard — preponderance of the evidence — that was less rigorous than the jury's finding beyond a reasonable doubt, were key reasons why a 5-4 majority of the Supreme Court found the guidelines unconstitutional.

When it came to fixing the problem, an-

other 5-4 majority ruled that the guidelines should now be considered "effectively advisory" instead of mandatory.

Although some of the long-term implications of the rulings are still being sorted out, this is a welcome and long-overdue development, suggesting that judges can still defer to the guidelines without being handcuffed by them.

And while the court's decisions bring some much-needed balance to sentencing, they have provoked angry reactions from some members of Congress. Those members should give the court's decisions time to settle, and view them as restoring proper checks and balances, not promoting disrespect.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



Mass. clergy child rape trial set to begin

Defrocked priest Shanley accused of molesting parishioners

BY DENISE LAVOIE
The Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Paul Shanley, who was defrocked by the Vatican in 2004, was to go on trial Tuesday on child rape charges in one of a handful of criminal cases that prosecutors have been able to bring against priests accused of molesting their young parishioners decades ago.

Most of the priests accused in civil lawsuits have avoided criminal prosecution because the alleged crimes were committed so long ago that charges were barred by the statute of limitations.

But because Shanley moved out of Massachusetts, the clock

stopped, allowing prosecutors to arrest him in May 2002 for sexual abuse that allegedly took place between 1979 and 1989.

Shanley became one of the most notorious figures in the clergy sex scandal after internal church documents were released showing church officials knew about allegations against him as early as 1967 yet continued to transfer him from parish to parish.

Prosecutors started out with four alleged victims, who said they were sexually abused by Shanley at St. Jean's parish in Newton when they were children. The men told similar stories of being taken out of religious education classes and raped by Shan-

ley, in the church rectory, confessional and restroom.

But prosecutors dropped two of the alleged victims from the case and plan to drop a third before testimony begins, leaving only one accuser.

Shanley's lawyer, Frank Mondano, has made it clear he will argue that the man made up his story of abuse to win a monetary award in a civil lawsuit.

All of the alleged victims settled civil lawsuits with the Boston Archdiocese in April 2004. The exact monetary terms were not disclosed, but an attorney for the men has said each received more than \$300,000. That was the maximum settlement re-

ceived by 550 other alleged abuse victims received in an \$85 million settlement reached with the archdiocese in September 2003.

Prosecutors have asked Judge Stephen Neel to bar Shanley's defense from introducing evidence of the civil settlement. The judge has not yet ruled on the request.

Shanley's defense also plans to challenge the man's claims of repressed memories. The man said he did not remember the abuse until after the clergy scandal erupted in Boston three years ago.

The notoriety of both the scandal and the defendant could make picking a jury difficult. Neel has set aside four trials for jury selection. The trial is expected to last about two weeks.



Paul Shanley

La Conchita to leave mudslide pile where it is

Geologists, officials warn moving mound of earth is too dangerous

BY FRED ALVAREZ
Los Angeles Times

LA CONCHITA, Calif. — In a setback for residents trying to rebuild their town, Ventura County officials said Monday that the mound of earth that buried 13 homes and killed 10 people last week in La Conchita should remain there indefinitely because moving it would be too dangerous.

County workers are fencing off the mud pile and plan to leave it in place to buttress the unstable hillside that rises 600 feet above the coastal community between Ventura and Santa Barbara. At least 400,000 tons of earth swamped the town, leaving a mass of mud and debris measuring 30 feet deep in places.

"If it's touched it can move again and cause another slide," said Supervisor John Flynn. "I say leave it where it is."

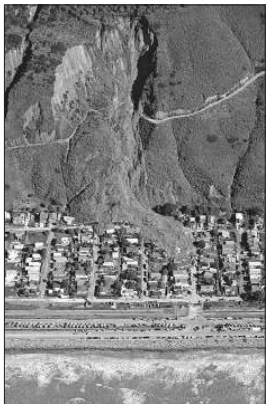
Geologists have advised steering clear of the slide or risk making things worse, said County Executive Officer Johnny Johnston, adding that there has been talk of replacing some of the dirt removed during the rescue operation to help shore up the massive mud pile.

"It just stands to reason that a certain equilibrium or balance can be achieved by keeping it in place," Johnston said. "We're not touching that."

La Conchita has been the site of numerous landslides over the last century, including one in 1995, when an estimated 600,000 tons of mud crushed nine ocean-view homes during a powerful March storm. No one was killed in that landslide.

In the wake of that slide, officials decided against trying to move the mound. Rather, they placed a chain-link fence around the slide area and three badly damaged homes, freezing in time the fury of that day.

Longtime resident Mike Bell said he believes that those actions helped stabilize the hillside, noting that one of the homes crumpled in 1995 made it through last week's slide. That home, with the words "What Slide?" defiantly spray-painted on its buckled roof, is located along heavily damaged Vista Del Rincon Drive.



This aerial view shows the scene of the massive mudslide that buried homes in La Conchita, Calif. Officials plan to leave the massive pile of mud where it stands to provide stability for the hillside.

Bell, 57, said he favors keeping last week's slide in place, for now. He is among residents pushing local, state and federal officials to find the money to permanently stabilize the hillside above La Conchita.

County officials have said such a project could cost \$100 million or more and there would be no guarantee it would remove the slide risk. Moreover, some county supervisors have questioned whether taxpayers should foot the bill for such work.

The county has urged residents not to return to La Conchita because the slide zone remains unstable. But residents have been trickling back through the weekend.

The search for victims was halted last week after the mudslide shifted 6 feet. Residents and geologists reported over the weekend that the slide had moved another 15 feet farther downhill.

The final decision on what to do with the mound will come later, Johnston said. Both the county and the property owners whose homes are buried underneath will have a say, he said.

In the meantime, efforts continue this week to clean up and restore services to the mud-ravaged community.

Doctor will perform free biopsy on boy's tumor named 'Frank'

BY KRISTEN GELINEAU
The Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — A 9-year-old boy whose mother launched an online auction to help pay for a biopsy on her son's tumor will have the procedure done for free, his mother said.

Dr. Henry Shalman of the Skull Base Institute at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center agreed to perform the biopsy free of charge on the tumor young David Dingman-Grover named "Frank," said Frank Groff, spokesman for the Los Angeles institution.

David's parents had been auctioning off a bumper sticker reading "Frank Must Die" on eBay to raise money for the procedure.

"We have been so blessed," said David's mother, Tiffini Dingman-Grover, of Sterling, Va., on Monday.

David named the tumor at the base of his skull after Frankenstein, who used to scare him until he dressed up as the monster for Halloween.

The little boy was diagnosed in May 2003 with a grapefruit-sized malignant tumor called a rhabdomyosarcoma. Chemotherapy shrank it to the size of a peach pit, but David needs a specialized biopsy to determine whether the tumor is still cancerous, his mother and doctor said.

David's biopsy is scheduled for Feb. 2. The family still has to help pay for the anesthesiologist and other hospital fees, but the \$40,000 in private donations they've received since caught the public's attention earlier this month will be sufficient, Dingman-Grover said.

Lawyers seek time for a fen-phen settlement

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Lawyers for the drug maker Wyeth and lawyers representing people suing the company over diet drugs have asked a federal judge here to approve a stay of litigation so that settlement talks could move forward.

Such a settlement would affect thousands who suffered heart valve damage after taking the so-called fen-phen diet drug combination.

The request for a stay, which lawyers involved in thousands of suits announced Tuesday, came as The Wall Street Journal reported that Wyeth had reached a tentative settlement framework with a group of plaintiffs' lawyers for nearly all the remaining liability cases.

The newspaper, citing unidentified people familiar with the negotiations, said the deal would apply to cases brought by more than 60,000 people who decided not to participate in a national class-action settlement reached in 1999.

The cases allege heart-valve damage from Wyeth's diet drugs Redux and Pondimin, which were one-half of the combination known as fen-phen. The drug maker, based in Madison, N.J., withdrew them from the market in 1997.

In the statement issued Tuesday, Wyeth said the request for a stay would only apply to those plaintiffs who wish to participate in the process. It can be lifted if the process does not result in a final settlement, lawyers said. Law firms wishing to participate must choose to do so by Feb. 15.

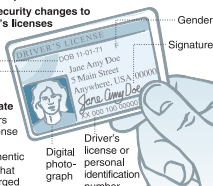
Standardized driver's ID creates debate

Law to combat driver's license fraud

New federal standards aim to combat identity fraud — and terrorism — by beefing up requirements for driver's licenses. The law standardizes the documents needed to obtain a license and mandates that they be readable by machine.

Some proposed security changes to standardized driver's licenses

Person's date of birth
Full legal name and address of principal residence
Law aims to regulate
► Documents drivers present to get a license
► Verification that documents are authentic
► Ability to ensure that licenses can't be forged



Source: Department of Homeland Security

BY ROBERT TANNER
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Privacy advocates are warning that the new federal standards for driver's licenses — a common form of photo identification in the United States — will centralize information that can be misused. Government officials say they're just trying to close a security loophole, and that the worries are overblown.

The federal intelligence overhaul that became law last month — while creating a new national intelligence director and beefing up border patrols — also aims to close loopholes for identity fraud that some of the Sept. 11 terrorists used to get aboard the jets they hijacked in 2001. People boarding U.S. airplanes must show photo identification.

Driver's licenses vary by state, but they all feature a photo and personal information such as home address and date of birth.

"There is a strong sense of protection of privacy by all of the administrators of DMV [Department of Motor Vehicles] records, because we know the value of the information we've been entrusted with," said George Tatum, North Carolina's Department of Motor Vehicle commissioner. "We just want you to be who you say you are."

The small provision in the massive intelligence overhaul doesn't take effect immediately. It requires a year-and-a-half of deliberation by state and federal officials, and others.

States can opt out — refuse to make changes to their driver's licenses that will be required under

the federal law — but then the licenses would be useless for any federal purpose, from getting benefits to boarding an airplane guarded by federal screeners.

The intelligence law aims to standardize the documents drivers present to get a license, the ways DMV workers verify that those documents are authentic, the information included on a license and the steps authorities take to ensure licenses can't be forged. The law also requires that licenses can be read by machines.

Many of the law's specifics have yet to be decided. Will licenses include biometric information like fingerprints or retinal scans? Will "machine-readable" mean bar codes or radio frequency identification systems — in which a tiny computer chip transmits data and can theoretically be used to track location?

Hunting season's end brings hundreds of dogs to shelters

BY PHYLIS SPEIDELL
The Virginian-Pilot

SUFFOLK, Va. — Nathanial Skeeter dreads January.

After 31 years as a Suffolk animal control officer, he knows that the end of hunting season will bring an influx of floppy-eared hounds to the animal shelter.

They are mostly hunting dogs, often very thin and scratched from running through the woods. A few have collars, but many more do not. Some still carry the numbers and letters dyed on their flanks that brand them as part of a hunter's pack.

Backed recently by the baying chorus of a dozen hounds already in the shelter, Skeeter explained that some are turned in by their owners at the end of the season. But most are picked up in the city's rural areas of Whaleyville, Holland and Chuckatuck.

Some of the dogs may have strayed, he said, but more were abandoned by hunters unwilling

to feed and care for them year-round. Others are brought across the North Carolina-Virginia border to be dumped in Suffolk, where they forage the woods, sometimes preying on chickens or pigs. When hunger drives the dogs to more populated areas, suburban residents call Skeeter's staff.

He may see a hundred hounds a year. Waverly Traylor, animal control officer in Isle of Wight County, said he sees 200 to 300. Most of the homeless hounds are set loose in the rural areas of western Tidewater where hunting is more common.

Skeeter and Traylor agree that a small minority of hunters cause the problem. Most take better care of their dogs, identifying them with microchip implants or radio collars.

Kathy Strouse, animal control coordinator in Chesapeake, said that although she, too, sees more hound-type dogs this time of year, "It's an urban myth that

dogs that don't hunt are dumped."

Like most shelters, Chesapeake doesn't track numbers of specific breeds, but Strouse said hounds did not make up a disproportionate share of the 2,329 dogs taken in by Chesapeake in 2004.

Officials with Norfolk-based People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals disagree.

"A lot of the rescue work we do is on Route 58 between Suffolk and North Carolina and beyond," said Daphna Nachmiovitch, PETA's director of domestic animal issues. "The dogs are not always intentionally left, but many are not well cared for. They have worms, heartworm and are malnourished and neglected-looking."

Some of the luckier deserted hounds find their way to groups such as K-9 New Life Center, a Hampton Roads no-kill rescue operation that places dogs in foster homes to be nurtured back to health and cared for until a permanent adoption is arranged.



Mario Wallenda is shown Friday, at his home in Sarasota, Fla., describing how his specially built two-wheeled "sky cycle" that he's used to motor across a tightrope works.

A Flying Wallenda to make a comeback

BY MITCH STACY
The Associated Press

SARASOTA, Fla. — Mario Wallenda says he doesn't remember anything about that day in January 1962 when he tumbled from a tightrope in Detroit, an accident that left him a paraplegic.

The adopted son of Paul Wallenda, patriarch of the famous Flying Wallenda family of acrobats, Mario was 21 when he had to leave the circus life. But he still ached to walk the high wire again.

Now retired after decades working at a contact lens lab, Wallenda is looking to get back on the tightrope — in a specially built two-wheeled electric "sky cycle."

"I'm 64, and hopefully I have awhile," Wallenda said recently, outside the modest home he built on land his father bought in the 1940s, when Sarasota was the epicenter of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. "I just can't sit around the house and not do anything."

Wallenda and his nephew, Tino Wallenda, developed the stunt for the 1996 Special Olympics in Atlanta. But liability concerns got in the way and it never happened.

Later, in 2001, they contacted Guinness World Records, which taped Mario Wallenda's stunt 40 feet above the parking lot of a Sarasota church. But, for whatever reasons, the segment never aired in the United States.

Though he has always missed show business, and he could use the money to supplement his Social Security income, Wallenda mostly just wants something to do that makes him feel alive and productive again.

For decades, the Flying Wallendas toured the country, entertaining crowds with their high-wire performances, juggling and other acts.

Lately, though, the family has had difficulty finding audiences for Wallenda and his electric "sky cycle," which allows him to drive on the wire using switches on a long balancing pole.

Hoping to generate some publicity again, Wallenda got the sky cycle out of his garage recently, and performed the stunt last month. He made it 72 feet across the wire but didn't feel comfortable in the chair this time. He is undeterred, though, and eager to try again.

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Deadline for messages 27 Jan 05, Drawing on 14 Feb 05

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Home for tiger cubs

NC CHARLOTTE — Two young tiger cubs found wandering along a highway were given a home at the North Carolina Zoo recently as zoo officials worried that private ownership of exotic animals poses an increasing danger.

"This is just the latest example of a huge ongoing problem that the state Legislature needs to address," said zoo director David Jones. "These animals being kept in private hands pose a real threat to public safety and are detrimental to the welfare of the animals themselves."

The zoo pushed for several years for state laws to restrict private ownership of exotics, he said. Within the past 18 months, two North Carolina children have been mauled by tigers, including a young Wilkes County boy who was killed.

Charged for lawyer jokes

NY HEMPSTEAD — Did you hear the one about the two jokes arrested for telling lawyer jokes? But seriously folks, it happened to the founders of a group called "Americans for Legal Reform," who were waiting in line to get into the First District Courthouse.

"How do you tell when a lawyer is lying?" Harvey Kash reportedly asked Carl Lanzisera.

"His lips are moving," they said in unison.

While some waiting to get into the courthouse giggled, an attorney further up the queue was not laughing. He told them to pipe down, and when they didn't, the attorney reported the pair to court personnel, who charged them with disorderly conduct, a misdemeanor.

"They just can't take it," Kash said of lawyers in general. "They're so used to control. We were outside on the street. This violates our First Amendment rights."

Dan Bagnuolo, a spokesman for the Nassau County courts, said the men were "being abusive and they were causing a disturbance."

Site for museum

KS WICHITA — City officials have secured a riverfront site for a Kansas African-American museum, which could end up named for famed photographer Gordon Parks, a native of Fort Scott.

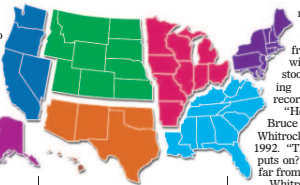
Parks, who now lives in New York, supports plans for the \$19.5 million museum and has donated 29 photographs, valued at \$1 million, to the project.

Cargo stowaways nabbed

CA LOS ANGELES — The day after 32 Chinese nationals were found in shipping containers at the Port of Los Angeles, federal and local authorities said they were trying to unravel what appeared to be a human smuggling operation.

"Our intention at the moment is to develop a smuggling case," said Immigrant and Customs Enforcement spokeswoman Virginia Kice.

The 28 men and four male teenagers, apparently trying to sneak into the United States, were found inside two containers after a crane operator spotted several stowaways emerging from a hole in one



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

of the containers. The containers were being loaded onto the vessel during a stop in Shekou, China, port officials said.

Investigators said the stench coming from the containers was "overwhelming." Inside they found discarded food packages, blankets, and containers overflowing with human waste. The stowaways traveled with food and water, and authorities said all were in good condition. They had also set up small battery-powered fans in the container.

Suspect has record

MN MINNEAPOLIS — A man suspected in 23 bank robberies in the Twin Cities during the last year and a half was well-known to authorities as a public nuisance with a temper and a history of criminal activity, according to police records.

John Whitrock, 56, is suspected of being a notorious bank robber known as the Fishing Hat Bandit, after the floppy hats he sometimes wore. He was arrested Jan. 7 and charged with robbing a credit union in Edina.

Neighbors have described him as a nice man, but Whitrock has been convicted twice of driving while intoxicated, stopped twice for attempting to shoplift from a supermarket and cited for public displays in women's underwear and a blond wig, according to reports published by the Minneapolis Star-Tribune and the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

neer Press.

He also once threatened his girlfriend's ex-boyfriend with a gun as the man stood at a urinal, according to Eagan police records.

"He's a dirtbag," said Bruce Windlund, the man Whitrock pointed the gun at in 1992. "That nice guy act he puts on? You don't know how far from the truth that is."

Whitrock has been charged only with the one robbery, but police said he has admitted to 19 other heists. Born in Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., Whitrock completed a year of college and served two years in the Army. In the late 1980s, he was a button-down, tie-wearing financial analyst.

Governor's popularity

CT HARTFORD — Gov. M. Jodi Rel's popularity is at 83 percent, the highest ever recorded for a state official in the Quinnipiac University poll.

Nearly half of those polled said Rel's decision to deliver her State of the Address nine days after heart bypass surgery makes them think more favorably of her.

Hog keeps growing

ND HARLOW — Jean and Bernard Meyer have a celebrity on their Benson County farm. He doesn't have a name, but he's a heavyweight.

The Meyers' 7-foot, 8-inch hog weighs 1,300 pounds.

Bernard Meyer, who has raised hogs for more than 50 years, said the 2-year-old Yorkshire-Hampshire-Duroc cross weighed 300 pounds when purchased in Minnesota nearly two years ago.

"He usually gets corn in his rations," Meyer said. "He doesn't get a lot of feed. He just happened to be a fast grower. I tell my friends he just grew up."

"I thought that if I can get him to 1,500 pounds, I can take him to the State Fair," Meyer said. "We weighed him last summer and he was 1,200 pounds. By fall, he weighed 1,300 pounds."

Donation's nudity clause

WA SEATTLE — An art lover left his hometown about \$1 million to buy a new fountain, but with a stipulation.

The late Stu Smalles made clear the work must include the figure of at least one life-size naked man.

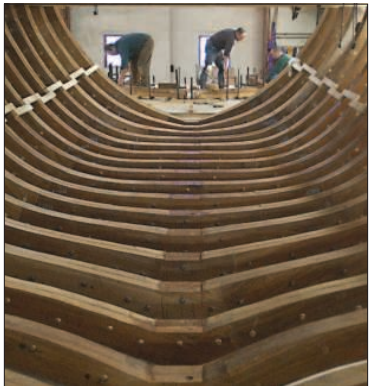
Smalles, a retired computer analyst, died in 2002 at the age of 69. He was an only child, with no immediate family. His attorney, Tim Bradbury, said Smalles was a great fan of the arts.

"He was a very funny man," Bradbury said, with a "very strong sense of humor."

According to court documents, the fountain bequest is to include "one or more unclothed, life-size male figure(s) designed in the classical style, i.e., realistic," said Karen Byström at the City's Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs.

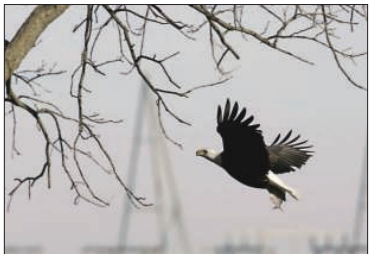
Byström said somebody in her office has suggested the naked-man fountain be part of the Seattle Art Museum's new Olympic Sculpture Park, now a work in progress at the north end of the downtown waterfront.

The agreement is still being negotiated.



Time travel

Rockport (Maine) Marine employees work on the latest replica of the Godspeed, one of three ships that carried settlers nearly 400 years ago to land in Virginia, the site of the first permanent English settlement in the New World. The work is expected to be completed by March 2006, well in time for the following year's 400th anniversary of the settlement.



Grabbing something to eat

A bald eagle carries a fish caught in the Mississippi River in Keokuk, Iowa, which was holding its annual Eagle Appreciation Days to celebrate the year's largest gathering of the birds.



Blazing hot

Company in Oklahoma City.

A large cloud of fire rises above firefighters working a five-alarm fire at the B&M Oil



Fierce protector

A dog keeps an eye out for any intruders in the back yard of a home in Las Cruces, N.M.



Morning view The small town of Hilo, Hawaii, wakes to blue skies, sunshine and snow high up on Mauna Kea mountain.



Tattoo you Efrain Rosario, right, applies a temporary tattoo on Laverne Hollins during Art Deco Weekend in the South Beach section of Miami Beach, Fla. Art Deco Weekend started with three vendors at the Cardozo Hotel more than a quarter-century ago.



Runneth over

The Santa Felicia Dam overflows in Piru, Calif. Recent storms brought heavy rain and snow to several western states.



Thinking of others

People gather in the shape of a heart to commemorate La Conchita, Calif., mudslide and Asian tsunami victims at Santa Barbara City College in Santa Barbara, Calif.

Coin sells for about \$3M

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — The legendary Brasher Doubloon, the first gold coin made in the United States, sold for nearly \$3 million at a public auction.

President of Rare Coin Wholesalers Steven Contursi and Dr. Donald Kagan of California jointly purchased the gold piece.

The coin was hand-struck in 1787 by George Washington's New York City neighbor, gold and silversmith Ephraim Brasher. Only 10 examples survive.

Referee attacker freed

PA PITTSBURGH — Hampton, Pa., parent Peter Dukovich will not serve jail time for his attack on a high-school basketball referee.

Common Pleas Judge John Zottola convicted Dukovich of simple assault but acquitted him of three other charges, including assault on a sports official.

Zottola said Dukovich, 48, had lived an exemplary life until his confrontation with Ron Bell during a Feb. 6 game. Nothing would be gained by jailing Dukovich to jail for an incident that was out of character with his history as a good parent and citizen, Zottola said.

Fake ad fools some

MN MINNEAPOLIS — A fake radio announcement purporting to notify Minnesotans about a state "light-out" law has dozens of perplexed people calling the state Department of Natural Resources.

KDWB radio listeners have been directed to visit a Web site to file for a light extension or rat out a neighbor.

The supposed DNR site (www.lightoutminnesota.org) looks official enough with photos of the Capitol, loons and a lady's slipper as well as a message from the director and his smirking photo. Fines, he warns, will be assessed on a per-bulb basis.

"It's a bit of an April Fool's joke in January," explained Rob Morris, KDWB's program director. Radio folks call it a buzz bit — it gets someone's attention.

Adult seat belt use up

AL MONTGOMERY — Seat belt use in Alabama last year was at a record high of 80 percent, but fewer people were buckling up children in car seats.

That rate dropped from 87 percent in 2003 to 83 percent in 2004. State health officials announced the results after a study observed use of the restraints in 15 selected counties.

College gal can chow

PA CLEARFIELD — Kate Stelnick may weigh only 100 pounds, but her appetite is remarkable.

The college student from Princeton, N.J., is the first to meet a restaurant's challenge by downing its six-pound hamburger — and five pounds of fixins' — within three hours.

Stelnick, 19, didn't eat for two days to prepare for the challenge. "I felt very full, but I was too excited that I actually ate it to notice," Stelnick said. She made the five-hour drive to Denny's Beer Barrel Pub after seeing pictures of

the monster burger, dubbed the Ye Old 96er.

Nobody had finished the big burger in the three-hour time limit since it was introduced on Super Bowl Sunday 1998. In addition to the meat, contestants must eat one large onion, two whole tomatoes, one half head of lettuce, 1 1/4 pounds of cheese, two buns, and a cup each of mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, relish, banana peppers and some pickles.

Stelnick did it all in two hours, 54 minutes.

Bar owner Denny Leiley Jr. said he was pretty sure somebody would meet his burger challenge, though he didn't have a pettie woman in mind.

Suspect found in TV

GA BAINBRIDGE — A man allegedly on the run from Florida authorities since September was found curled up inside a TV.

After receiving a tip that Alfred Blane, 45, of Ponce de Leon, Fla., might be in Decatur County, police went to a mobile home near Bainbridge College, where a woman told police he was hiding under a mattress inside.

With the department's police dog, officers went inside. They searched the house thoroughly, even checking a freezer and washing machine, said Lt. Tim Watkins of the Thomas County Sheriff's Department.

Meanwhile, the dog kept poking around a TV, an older floor model, Watkins said. When officers unscrewed the back of the television, they found a balled-up Blane inside, Watkins said, adding that Blane is between 5-foot-10 and 6-feet tall.

Blane escaped in handcuffs from two sheriff's deputies in September as they tried to place him in the back of a police car, said Capt. Stan Sunday of the Walton County Sheriff's Office in Florida. He faces many charges, including burglary, possession of methamphetamine, battery on a law enforcement officer and escape.

Body found off shore

HI HILO — A 54-year-old woman was found dead in a submerged car at the Pohokiki Boat Ramp at Isaac Hale Beach Park in Puna on the Big Island.

Police said they identified the woman but were withholding her name until next of kin were notified. No foul play is believed to be involved in the woman's death, Detective Juergen Canda said.

Hawaii County Fire Department officials say a snorkeler found the car 50 feet from the shoreline in 10 feet of water. The doors were locked, the windows were rolled up and the car was filled with water, the officials said.

Library legislation

VA RICHMOND — Two Virginia lawmakers are pushing bills that would require any public library that receives state funds to install filtering software on its computers.

The legislation is necessary to protect children from unwittingly stumbling across pornography while using the Internet for their local libraries, said the House bill's sponsor, Del. Samuel Nixon, Jr., R-Chesterfield.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

Following in MLK's footsteps

When Harry Belafonte met the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1950s, he promised to always assist in his mission.



Belafonte

Thirty-seven years after King's death, the actor, singer and activist is still keeping his pledge.

Belafonte met with a group of about 60 people, many of them children, during a celebration of King's life at a Boys and Girls Club. He said the 13 years he worked side-by-side with the civil rights leader were "the most important of my life."

Each and every one of you has the power, the will and the capacity to make a difference in the world in which you live in," Belafonte said. "You should go through life knowing, 'I am somebody.'"

Freedom was the theme of many questions posed by the kids, and one query left the 77-year-old Belafonte particularly reflective.

"How does it feel to be free?" asked 10-year-old Shawn Gordon.

Answered Belafonte: "When I get it, I will tell you."

Stylish even in death

Samuel L. Jackson dies in his next huge film — but he does it in a really cool way.

Director George Lucas assured the actor that his Jedi knight character would go out in a blaze of glory in the forthcoming "Star Wars: Episode III — Revenge of the Sith," and the director apparently made good on his promise.

"It's raising," Jackson told the San Francisco Chronicle. "It's a great light-saber battle with 102 moves in three big rooms."

For now, though, Jackson is enjoying the success of his "Coach Carter," in which he stars as a high-school basketball mentor who shuts down the program to focus on his players' lagging academic education.



Jackson

Criminals learn from HBO show

David Simon's HBO series "The Wire" — a fictional account of a police investigation of Baltimore drug dealers — allegedly had some real-life dealers taking notes.

While announcing a crackdown of a cocaine ring, police said their investigation was hampered by the suspects' habit of switching cell phones — a technique for evading electronic eavesdropping they picked up from TV.

"Believe it or not, these guys copied 'The Wire,'" one of the investigators, Sgt. Felipe Rodriguez, said at a news conference.

"They were constantly dumping their phones. It made our job so much harder."

Police relied largely on wiretaps to infiltrate the gang, which made up to \$15 million a year. The result: 12 arrests and seizure of 43 kilograms of cocaine, 18 handguns, \$500,000 cash and five luxury vehicles.

Kirstie Alley exploits the fat facts

The person who dreamed up a TV series about Kirstie Alley's embarrassing battle with her weight and struggles inside the Hollywood fishbowl might be surprising.

It was Kirstie Alley.

"Actually, the show was my idea," she told the Rocky Mountain News in Denver. "It was sort of like I could either die — slit my throat, knowing that I could not work for a year or however long it would take to lose the weight — or I could make a series. You know, go with the flow and turn this into something fabulous."

Alley admits friends warned the former star of "Cheers" and "Veronica's Closet" that doing the upcoming Showtime series "Fat Actress" would be show-business suicide.

"I didn't listen. I believe that things will work out when you're honest about something and find humor in situations," she said.

Stories and photos from wire services

'Gentle giant' on and off screen

Jorge Garcia plays a cool, collected survivor on ABC's 'Lost'

BY DANIEL FIENBERG

Zap2it.com

The plucky survivors of ABC's "Lost" could serve as a casebook for how most people would respond to being stranded on a deserted (and mysterious) island. Some folks would be as handy and altruistic as Matthew Fox's Jack or as malevolently resourceful as Josh Holloway's Sawyer. Few of us would show the eerie mastery of Terry O'Quinn's Locke, but the reluctant brattiness of Maggie Grace's Shannon would probably be in abundance. For most viewers, though, emulating Jorge Garcia's Hurley would be the best of all possible worlds.

Like the subject of Rudyard Kipling's "If," Hurley has kept his head when all about him are losing theirs. Like that poem's ideal hero, he doesn't necessarily look too good nor talk too wise, but on the fractious island, he's a friend to all and an enemy to none, a gentle giant perfectly willing to do hard labor, deskwork or even invent a liberating game of island golf. It's no wonder that while Fox and Holloway and Evangeline Lilly (Kate) may get the press, Garcia has broken out as one of the show's most popular stars.

"I feel like suddenly I get a bit better customer service, where people are more anxious to help me," Garcia says of his public reception. "Usually when people spot me, they're really happy to see me."

While the other characters on "Lost" constantly appear grimy and miserable, stressed out and on the verge of giving up, Hurley always just seems happy to be alive. He's quick with a joke, the only castaway who could possibly be described as happy-go-lucky. Garcia seems to be the same way. The 25-year-old actor arrived at auditions for "Lost" before the character of Hurley even existed and found himself reading pages for Sawyer.

Even once producers assured him that his character would exist and that copies of the pilot script were available, the actor wasn't in any kind of rush to see how many lines he got or whether he'd get to have any big emotional moments. Most familiar from comedic work on "Becker" and "Curb Your Enthusiasm," Garcia had all the information he needed.

"I had faith in J.J. Abrams and shooting in Hawaii and that was pretty much all I needed to hear," he laughs.

For the first half of the shooting schedule, production has just been wish fulfillment for the Nebraska-born actor.

"I love what I've gotten to do so far," he says. "The whole thing where I ran away from the plane and it exploded behind me and we dove out in the sand, very action star-ish, I thought that was awesome. That's not something I really expected that I would get to do in my career."

Garcia notes, "Really all I need is a sword fight and I'll be totally satisfied."

Viewers, however, are far from satisfied with the mere snippets of knowledge they've received about the life of Hugo Reyes. While certain characters, including Fox's Jack, have already had multiple episodes dedicated to their backstories, Hurley has gone entirely unexplained, barring some cryptic hints. That won't change until the season's 18th hour, an episode which hasn't even been shot yet. Garcia, in fact, hasn't even seen a script, though the producers have let him in on the character's "big secret." Whatever that secret may be, Garcia isn't telling.

"Because there were hints laid out, I kinda had an idea that it was coming from here," he hedges, revealing nothing of his backstory.

"And then when I really stepped back and looked at it in the context of who Hurley has been up to this point, with the group, and that coming out in his revelation. Yeah, I thought it was pretty cool."

On the Internet, ways have been speculating for weeks over a perplexing line of dialogue where Hurley refers to

his normal life by saying, "I'm known as something of a warrior myself," a statement that has prompted buzz that Hurley could be everything from an extremely large undercover spy to an extremely dedicated Dungeons and Dragons player.

"There are certain things where you never realize what exactly the audience is going to jump on and really wonder about and catch," Garcia says of his "warrior" comment. "I didn't give that one too much attention and then I realized the attention it got on the Internet. So it made me wonder, 'Yeah, actually I wonder what that is.'"

He adds that in the script, the character smiles after making the statement, but the camera never cut back to his face.

As much of a conspiracy buff as he may be, Garcia isn't stressing out about solving the riddles of "Lost." Like his character, he's just content where he is, taking his off-days to swim at a favorite secluded Hawaiian beach.

"I float in the water and reflect on how great my life is right now," Garcia sighs.



Jorge Garcia plays Hurley on the action-packed adventure that will bring out the very best and the very worst in the people who are "Lost."

COURTESY OF ABC

YOUR MONEY

Americans to offer perks to military

BY LISA BURGESS
Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — American Airlines is extending special travel offers for military personnel, including reduced fares, pre-boarding courtesies, and the use of the executive lounge.

The Fort Worth, Texas-based airline is extending several of its special fares to domestic and some international destinations until June 5, Tara Phillips, a spokeswoman for the airline, said in a Thursday e-mail outlining the extended benefits.

For servicemen and their families who are heading to Europe, Latin America and Japan, discounted tickets will be available for travel through May 31.

The airline also is eliminating the minimum stay requirement on its discounted fares for servicemen. Instead of requiring a Saturday-night stay, American is simply requiring that servicemen spend a single night at their destination in order to get the lower ticket prices.

The reduced fares are available to active-duty servicemen, as well as activated National Guard or reservists, who are on leave or furlough (including those who are traveling within seven days of discharge from active service), and their spouse and dependent children.

American Airlines executives also have decided to continue a practice, instituted almost a year ago, of inviting uniformed military personnel to pre-board the aircraft, or board at any time — a courtesy usually extended only to first-class passengers and those with special needs.



Passengers wait at an American Airlines ticket counter at the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport in Grapevine, Texas, in 2002. Waits for servicemen traveling on American Airlines will be shorter starting now, when the airline introduces special offers for troops, including pre-boarding.

Finally, American is extending through June 5 its invitation to any uniformed servicemen who is on emergency or R&R leave from Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom to use American's "Admirals Club" facilities at any airport worldwide that does not offer USO facilities, Phillips said.

To gain access to an Admirals Club, eligible military personnel in appropriate uniform should present their emergency or R&R leave forms at the facility's entrance.

Discounted tickets are available at American Airlines ticketing locations or by calling American's reservations number at 1-800-433-7300 or 1-800-633-3711 for Spanish. Military ID must be presented at the time of airport check-in. The military fares are not available via the Internet.

E-mail Lisa Burgess at:
burgess@stripes.com; osd.mil

Judge blocks Enron info in WorldCom CEO's trial

BY ERIN MCCLEAM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The judge in the trial of ex-WorldCom Inc. chief Bernard Ebbers ruled Tuesday that the defense could keep the star witness about marital infidelity and blocked testimony about Ebbers' knowledge of hearings into the Enron scandal.

The government had sought to produce evidence that Ebbers watched the hearings on the collapse of Enron Corp. and discussed them with Scott Sullivan, his chief financial officer.

Federal prosecutors had hoped to use the episode to show that Ebbers knew WorldCom's own accounting procedures amounted to criminal conduct. Ruling on the eve of Ebbers' trial, U.S. District Judge Barbara Jones said she did not see the relevance.

Sullivan had faced his own trial until pleading guilty last year and agreeing to testify against his former boss.

The judge also said she would allow Ebbers' defense lawyers to question Sullivan about marital infidelity because it addresses "Mr. Sullivan's character for truthfulness."

But in a victory for the government, the judge refused to grant

immunity to two former WorldCom executives who the defense says could provide testimony favorable to Ebbers.

The defense wants to use the two executives to show that Sullivan, not Ebbers, was behind WorldCom's accounting tricks — but contends the government is keeping them "in limbo" and reserving the right to prosecute them.

"We don't have a fair trial if this evidence is not before the jury," Ebbers' lawyer Reid Weingarten said, unsuccessfully trying to sway the judge.

The rulings came the day before potential jurors are to fill out questionnaires in the trial of Ebbers, who is charged with orchestrating WorldCom's accounting fraud. Opening statements could begin some time next week.

Ebbers, 63, has pleaded not guilty. The charges against him carry up to 85 years in prison.

In 2002, WorldCom collapsed under the weight of an \$11 billion accounting fraud and filed for the largest bankruptcy in the history of American business.

Federal prosecutors say Ebbers lied about his company's finances before the collapse, orchestrating a shell game to cover up its problems.

Regulations, demand dictate housing prices

BY HOLDEN LEWIS
bankrate.com (KRT)

Lima, Ohio, has the most affordable housing in the country, while Santa Barbara, Calif., resides at the other end of the spectrum, according to the National Association of Home Builders.

Nine of the 10 most-affordable markets in the organization's Housing Opportunity Index are in Ohio, Michigan and Illinois. All of the 10 least-affordable markets are in California.

The organization blames "excessive regulations" for much of the lack of affordability of the problem in California, but the state's enduring appeal has something to do with it, too.

Santa Barbara is sunny and nestled between mountains and sea, with little room to spread out. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the median household income in the county in 2004 was \$64,700. The NAHB says the median price of a home in metro Santa Barbara was \$447,000 in the third quarter of 2004. Prices rose rapidly. The California Association of Realtors says the median price of a home in the county hit \$668,750 in November.

Affordable Lima could scarcely be more different from Santa Barbara. Its skies are gray most of the winter, and it is surrounded by abundant, flat farmland that is pretty, but unspectacular. HUD says Lima's median family income in 2004 was \$39,000. The median sale price of all homes sold in the third quarter of 2004 was \$82,000, according to the NAHB.

In other words, a typical home in Santa Barbara costs more than 10 times a typical family's income, while a home in Lima costs about 1.6 times a family's income.

The home builders rank 162 metropolitan areas by estimating the percentage of homes sold that would be affordable to a family earning the area's median household income.

In Lima, a family earning the

median household income could have afforded 90.5 percent of the homes sold there last summer. In Santa Barbara, less than 5 percent of the homes sold would have been affordable to someone making the median household income.

"Ultimately, higher home prices are a matter of strong buyer demand," says Bobby Rayburn, a home builder and president of the NAHB. "But a big contributor has been a shortage of land available for development due to growth controls, and the high cost of regulations in general."

There is some truth to the NAHB's criticism of regulation, experts say. California has strong environmental protections, and it's hard to get permits to build houses on hillsides that are prone to fires and landslides.

While local governments try to come up with affordable housing policies, lenders are charging ahead with clever mortgage products.

Brett Vratil, a Realtor with Zip Realty who sells mostly in West Los Angeles, says almost all of his customers get interest-only mortgages, often for the total purchase price. Interest-only loans increase buyers' purchasing power by about 25 percent, Vratil says, and that's often what it takes to get someone into a home in Los Angeles.

Fixed-rate mortgages are becoming increasingly rare in California because adjustable-rate mortgages, or ARMs, have lower rates. One of the most popular loans is the 5/1 hybrid ARM, which starts out with a rate that lasts for five years, then adjusts annually thereafter. The initial rate on a 5/1 ARM is about three-quarters of a percentage point less than a comparable 30-year fixed.

The difference can spell big savings. A \$500,000 loan at 6 percent has a monthly principal-and-interest payment of \$2,998. A 5/1 ARM at 5.25 percent starts out with monthly principal-and-interest payments of \$2,188. The monthly payment is about \$2,188.

Cents and Sensibility

Money tip of the day

How much to tip

CBS MarketWatch

NEW YORK — Most people know that a standard restaurant gratuity is 15 percent to 20 percent, but how much to tip in other situations can be tricky.

Jodi R. R. Smith, president and founder of a Boston-based etiquette consulting firm, offers this advice:

Bartender: If you're sitting at the bar, \$1 per drink is enough.

Baby-sitter: Give him or her a

little extra if your kids have been especially difficult.

Movers: How much you tip depends on the scope and difficulty of your move. You should tip about \$10 to \$50 per mover.

Other situations: 15 percent of the cost for services.

Taxi driver: For expedient service — with no unnecessary detours — \$15 to \$20 if he or she flags down a cab for you. Don't tip for simply holding open a door for you.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs	\$1.3294
Dollar buys	0.7466
British pound	0.592
Japanese yen (Jan. 15)	100.00
South Korean won (Jan. 14)	1,010.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	1.377
British pound	0.592
Canada (dollar)	1.217
Denmark (krone)	6.559
Egypt (pound)	0.210
Hungary (Forint)	\$1.3106/0.656
Hong Kong (dollar)	0.799
Israel (sheqel)	186.06
Iceland (krona)	69.95
Iran (Rial)	4,350
Japan (yen)	100.46
Kuwait (dinar)	0.210
Norway (kroner)	5.52
Poland (zloty)	3.48
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.58
Singapore (dollar)	1.136
South Korea (won)	1,035.70
Switzerland (franc)	1.12
Thailand (Baht)	34.49
U.S. (New Line)	1.000

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency, the exchange rate is purchasing British pounds in Germany) Check with your military banking facility. Commercial rates are inter-bank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

PRECIOUS METALS

London close	
Gold	\$422.85
Silver	\$6.60

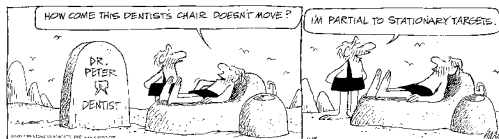
INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	5.25
Discount rate	3.25
3-month bill	3.25
3-month bank	2.34
30-year mortgage	5.75
Source: The Associated Press, Bank of America	

Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



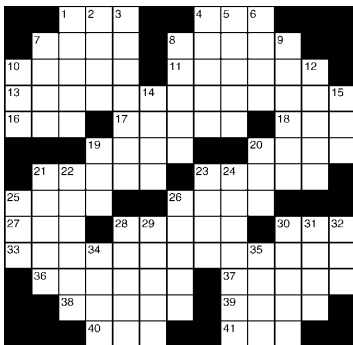
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Solidity
4 Mel of Cooperstown
7 It goes without saying
8 Binge
10 "The wonderful, wonderful cat"
11 Accessory for that little black dress
13 Prosperity, for many
16 Two, in Tijuana
17 Talk a blue streak?
18 Through
19 Toil
20 Suspenders

Down

- 40 Rep.'s rival
41 Apiece
19 Mich. neighbor
20 Morsel
21 Singer
McLachlan
22 Expiated
23 Sci-fi knights
24 Quick-walking ballroom dance
25 Vacationing
26 With demureness
28 Black
29 Sacred song
30 Circus staffer
31 Oklahoma city
32 Cookbook verb
34 Trampled (on)
35 Such as

Answer to Previous Puzzle



I-19 CRYPTOQUIP

M K W P H F X G B L K Y P H H Q
C M I V W Y T P B B M D X
Z G B Z G L F C W D I L Z C M B C

L T Z G B B Q B M Z M D X B L C V
Yesterday's Cryptquip: WHEN A SKELETON PARTAKES OF DINNERS, WOULD IT BE A SURE BET THAT HE PREFERS RIBS?

Today's Cryptquip Clue: B equals T

People must eventually help selves

Dear Abby: I met "Evan," the man of my dreams, when I was 18. He was 21. We had been dating only five months when he was diagnosed with leukemia. I stayed by his side the whole time, although my friends said no one would blame me if I didn't. Evan is now finished with chemotherapy and is in remission. I was there for him when his parents couldn't be. I gave him everything I had. I even dropped out of school so I could spend full time to make ends meet. Since Evan has finished his treatment, we've been trying to piece our life back together, but he has been horribly depressed.

I have tried to help. I found a psychologist for him.

He agreed to go, then canceled the appointment. He re-enrolled in school this semester. However, I found out last night that he had stopped going to class a long time ago.

He said it reminded him too much of how things used to be. He lied to me—and not for the first time.

To make matters worse, I had to tell his parents, because they had been paying for school and sending us money to help with the bills. He had refused to call them.

Abby, I love Evan with all my heart. His parents are offering to get him help. I'm torn between staying and leaving to rebuild my life. If he gets help for real, is it worth trying to save our relationship?

— Exhausted And Brokenhearted in K.C.

Dear Exhausted: You supported Evan when he could not help himself. Only he can fix his problems now. The longer you allow the status quo, the longer he will postpone taking responsibility.

If he continues to procrastinate, then recognize that it's time to leave and put your own life on

Dear Abby



Try to befriend boyfriend's family

Dear Annie: I am a 25-year-old single mother. I've never been married, and the situation I'm in right now does not make me look forward to walking down the aisle. I love "Gary" with all my heart. We have dated for three years, and he eventually wants to marry, but his family is not so welcoming. I understand the reason Gary moved out of his mother's home, and I am the reason he does not spend as much time with them as he used to.

Mind you, Annie, I do not stop him from seeing or calling them. I would never do that. His family, however, blames me. They start a lot of arguments. Last week, they lied to him about something I had said in order to make him angry with me. Fortunately, he didn't believe them, but it really upset me that they would stoop to that level.

Gary says he always will put me first. But I worry.

I want a future with a man whose family welcomes me and

Annie's Mailbox



treats me as one of their own. I don't see that that happening here. How should I handle this? I'm afraid that our life together will be over before it begins.

— Driven Away

Dear Driven: The potential in-laws sound difficult and unpleasant, but the important thing is Gary's attitude and support. If you believe that he will put

you first, you have nothing to worry about. However, it wouldn't hurt to turn on the charm and try to warm up the relatives. Be friendly and let them know how important it is to you that Gary stay close to his family. It will help.

Dear Annie: I recently bought a set of \$60 walkie-talkies for my children, and they brought the sets over to their cousins' home to play. Their 9-year-old cousin "Lila" bent over the pool, and the walkie-talkie fell in. The kids immediately fished it out, but it was not water-

proof. Do not feel guilty for doing so.

Dear Abby: This is a fan letter. A friend of mine gave me a copy of your booklet "Keepers." I keep it on my nightstand with my early morning reading material. I like the little essay "Hugging" so much that we adopted a version of it into our daily lives. Our family says, "Hey, I need a little vitamin H," and it is followed with a big hug. We have also invented "vitamin P," which means a loving little pat.

Thought you would like to know what a positive influence one of your letters has been to our family.

— Elizabeth Tyler Brown

Dear Elizabeth: Your letter warmed my heart. Everybody needs a diet rich in vitamins. My favorite is vitamin TLC, which I enjoy and dispense in liberal doses to everyone I love.

Letters for this column—with your name and home address—should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at: <http://www.ueppress.com/dearabby> Universal Press Syndicate

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

SES MY

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PRAAK

QUILOR

ANSAUE

www.jumble.com

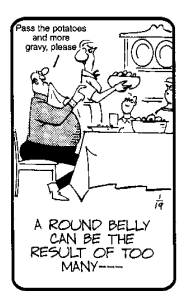
Ans: _____

Answers tomorrow

Yesterday's Jumbles: TRUTH EXILE HEIFER PROFIT

Answer: What inning did they pass the bottle around? — THE "FIFTH"

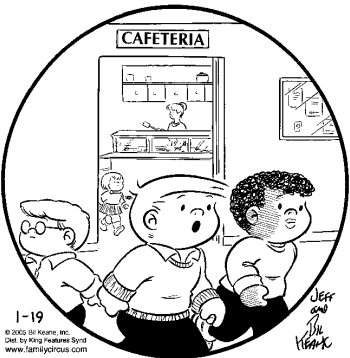
THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argiron



Now arrange the circled letters to form the same answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Family Circus



"I wouldn't want to be home-schooled, but I'd like to be home-fed."

GRAFFITI

REDUCE AIR POLLUTION AND PROFIT FROM IT—STOP SMOKING

M&A 1/19

Domis the Menace



The Far Side © Gary Larson



Testing whether or not animals "kiss."

Non Sequitur



Testing whether or not animals "kiss."

Long, cold winter for St. Bonaventure

Bonnies still staggering after being rocked by eligibility scandal in 2003

BY JOHN WAWROW
The Associated Press

OLEAN, N.Y. — The lunch crowd was gathering at Angeles, with little buzz in the restaurant about the St. Bonaventure basketball game that night.

The Bonnies were home against George Washington, then ranked No. 21 and the best team to come to town this season. Yet the closest thing to a smile inside this hangout was the one belonging to Bob Lanier. The St. Bonaventure great is wearing his No. 31 uniform and dribbling a ball in a yellowing black-and-white poster next to the bar.

"I don't think I'm going," said Fritz Gram, a law clerk and longtime season-ticket holder. "It's too painful."

"It's going to be a long year," added barber Ray Padlo.

Reminded that the season's already half over, Padlo corrected himself, saying: "It's been a long year already."

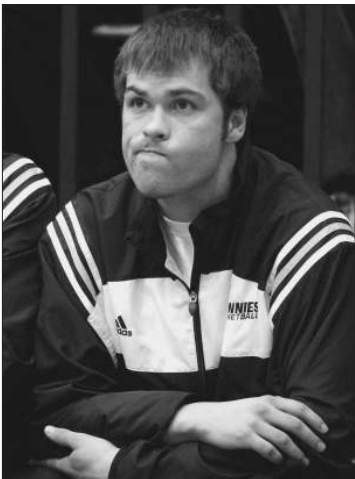
Olean, a basketball-mad town on the edge of the Pennsylvania border, is now home to a school struggling to win any games at all and trying to recover from a player-eligibility scandal that shook this community of 15,000.

At 1-13 following the loss to George Washington, the Bonnies are off to the worst start in school history and have lost 25 of 27.

The team has an RPI of 320 out of 330 Division I programs.

This is a long way from the days when the school earned four postseason berths from 1998-02. The highlight of that stretch came in 2000 when the Bonnies lost in overtime to Kentucky in the first round of the NCAA tournament. And it's even further from the golden era of Lanier, who led the Bonnies to a Final Four berth in 1970.

The current troubles stem from the scandal of March 2003. The school broke NCAA junior college



Tyler Relph, who is sitting out this season after transferring from West Virginia, watches St. Bonaventure lose to George Washington in Olean, N.Y., on Jan. 12 and fall to 1-13 on the year. A former New York State Mr. Basketball, Relph is excited about the Bonnies' future.

transfer guidelines by allowing forward Jamill Terrell to play despite earning only a welding certificate at a Georgia community college.

The Bonnies were barred from the Atlantic 10 playoffs that season, a decision that spurred the

players to boycott their final two regular-season games and led to NCAA sanctions a year later.

The mood is more upbeat on the St. Bonaventure campus overlooking the snow-covered Allegheny Mountains.

Standing in the foyer of the bas-

ketball office, coach Anthony Solomon claps his hands loudly, greeting a visitor by exclaiming: "I love this attention. If they want to talk about our record. Let them talk."

Inside his office, Solomon acknowledges what's apparent in the standings. "We're going through the most difficult time right now because of the growing pains that we're experiencing, especially on the scoreboard," he said. "Certainly, human nature wants you to win on the scoreboard."

The Bonnies are being outscored by an average of 16 points a night and there's been only one game in which they had more assists than turnovers.

Solomon remains patient, seeing gradual improvement in a young team. "These things in terms of building or rebuilding, it takes time and doesn't happen overnight," Solomon said. "I'm patient. We're going to persevere through it. And with time, we're going to get to where we'd all like to see it go."

Solomon has not had it easy since coming aboard in May 2003 as a replacement for Jan van Breda Kolff, who was dismissed after the school ruled he played a role in urging Terrell's transfer. Van Breda Kolff insists he knew nothing about Terrell's status and is suing St. Bonaventure for wrongful termination and libel.

The scandal took a darker turn in August 2003 when William Swan, chairman of the school's trustees, committed suicide, in

part because he thought he let down his alma mater.

Solomon, a former Notre Dame assistant, inherited a team that featured only six players following the defections of two returning players and two promising recruits.

The Bonnies went 7-21 last year, the modest success mostly the result of star point guard Marques Green, who has since graduated.

This year's roster is much more raw, the most experienced player being guard Ahmad Smith. But there is promise in sophomore guard Tyler Relph, a former New York State Mr. Basketball, who's sitting out this season after transferring from West Virginia last spring.

"I'm patient. We're going to persevere through it. And with time, we're going to get to where we'd all like to see it go."

Anthony Solomon
St. Bonaventure men's basketball coach

"You could look at it and cringe," Relph said, referring to the Bonnies' record. "I've got next year, and I'm just looking forward to it ... I see 1-12, it just makes me want to come shoot more and work harder. I look forward to the future."

It can't come soon enough for some, particularly in a tight community in which there are strictly two seasons: basketball season, and the period leading to basketball season.

"I started going to games in 1946, when my father started taking me, so it takes a lot to discourage me," said Gram, the law clerk.

Gram was asked if he thinks the Bonnies will turn things around.

He looked up from his plate. "Not this year," he said.

Tucker helps Texas to upset of Oklahoma State

The Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — After coming up with a big win, the Texas Longhorns wondered if their top scorer would be with them the rest of the season.

P.J. Tucker, who spent most of the first half on the bench in foul trouble, scored 15 points after the break and freshman point guard Daniel Gibson had 27 points and 10 rebounds in No. 15 Texas' 75-61 victory over Oklahoma State on Monday night.

Tucker, a sophomore forward, is facing academic issues that could make him ineligible for the spring semester, what was to start Tuesday. That means the important Big 12 win could be his last game.

Tucker and Texas coach Rick Barnes wouldn't comment on his status after the game. For now, the Longhorns can at least take comfort in the fact that Gibson appears ready to take over Tucker's role if needed.



"It really motivated us," Gibson said. "It really gives guys the opportunity to step up and do big things. It was a confidence boost."

Especially for Gibson, who scored 17 in the first half as the Longhorns built a 12-point lead. Tucker's clutch play down the stretch — he was 9-of-9 from the free-throw line — helped stifle a brief Oklahoma State rally. Texas — which also played without 6-foot-10 freshman center LaMarquis Aldridge, who is out indefinitely with a knee injury — went 25-for-28 from the line.

The Longhorns hardly missed Tucker when he wasn't on the floor in the first half.

Gibson hit a pair of three-pointers and routinely snaked through

the Cowboys' defense for open shots. He scored six points in a 15-3 Texas run that closed the first half.

Oklahoma State (13-2, 3-1) was plagued by foul trouble all night. Starters Joey Graham and Terrence Crawford both fouled out with more than eight minutes to play.

Ivan McFarlin scored 19 to lead the Cowboys.

The Longhorns, the highest-seeded team in the Big 12, forced 10 turnovers in the first half and Gibson turned two of them into fast-break layups. Texas held the Cowboys scoreless for six minutes and built a 39-27 halftime lead.

A 10-0 Oklahoma State run to open the second quickly cut the lead to two, but fouls continued to hinder the Cowboys. Crawford and Graham both picked up their fourth about 20 seconds apart.

Tucker finally did some dam-

age when he ended the Cowboys' run with his first basket, a tough layup in the lane, and Crawford fouled out. Tucker then fought his way around two Cowboys under the basket to tie for a sharp pass to Kenton Paulino, whose three-pointer pushed the lead to 46-39 before Gibson made it a 10-point cushion again with another three.

No. 16 Connecticut 77, Seton Hall 68: At East Rutherford, N.J., Josh Boone scored 20 points and Connecticut's frontcourt dominated on an off-night by the guards.

Freshman Rudy Gay added 18 points and Charlie Villanueva had 16 for Connecticut (11-3, 3-1 Big East), which won for the 11th time in 12 games against Seton Hall despite going 0-for-2 from three-point range.

Andre Sweet had 22 points for the Pirates (8-7, 0-4), who lost their fourth straight and are off to their worst conference start since going 0-7 in 1985-86.



Texas' P.J. Tucker, right, scored 15 points in Monday's victory but might be academically ineligible for the rest of the season.

NHL union to meet for first time in more than a month

BY IRA PODELL

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — For the first time in more than a month, a group of officials from the NHL and the players' association will meet Wednesday in what could be a last-ditch effort to save the hockey season.

"We think it is appropriate and hopefully useful to engage in these discussions at this time," Ted Sasaki, the union's senior director, said Monday. "We are not meeting to present a new proposal and remain committed to reaching a fair deal that does not include a salary cap."

Session could be last-ditch effort to save season

Monday marked the 124th day of the lockout. So far, the NHL has resisted announcing a drop-dead date in which a collective bargaining agreement must be made to save this season. But with 650 regular-season games plus this year's All-Star Game, already canceled, it appears that time is short to make a deal.

NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and players' association executive director Bob Goodenow, who have butted heads throughout the process, are expected to sit out this session. The idea to

meet in a smaller group was hatched by players' association president Trevor Linden.

Linden, Sasaki and outside counsel John McCambridge will represent the players. Calgary Flames part owner Harley Hotchkiss, the chairman of the NHL's board of governors; Bill Daly, the NHL's chief legal officer; and outside counsel Bob Battersman, will be present for the owners.

The NHL is not expected to make a new proposal at the meeting, either.

The sides have not met since

Dec. 14 when the NHL rejected the union's proposal — made five days earlier. A counteroffer made by the league also was rejected by the players during that session in Toronto.

The players' association got talks restarted in December, after three months of silence, with a proposal centered on an immediate 24-percent salary rollback on all existing contracts. Owners rejected that plan and countered with a salary-cap structured offer.

The NHLPA is adamant that it

will never accept a salary cap. The union's offer featured a luxury-tax and revenue-sharing system.

Bettman has said that he has no interest in a luxury tax.

During the 103-day lockout that disrupted the 1994-95 season, an agreement was reached on Jan. 11, 1995, allowing for a 48-game season that began nine days later. If the season is wiped out, it would mark the first time in 86 years that the Stanley Cup wasn't awarded. A flu epidemic canceled the 1919 final series between Montreal and Seattle. No North American sports league has lost an entire season due to a labor dispute.

Several sign, avoid arbitration

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Instead of swapping salary proposals, Alfonso Soriano and Cesar Izuris were among 16 players who avoided arbitration by agreeing to deals with their clubs.

Soriano got a \$7.5 million, one-year contract with Texas, and Izuris agreed to a \$9.9 million, three-year deal with Los Angeles on Monday.

Three Atlanta Braves — shortstop Rafael Furcal (\$5.6 million), closer Dan Kolb (\$3.4 million) and reliever Chris Reitsma (\$1.65 million) — and three Florida Marlins right-handers — A.J. Burnett (\$3.65 million), Guillermo Mota (\$2.6 million) and Tim Lincecum (\$350,000) — also got one-year deals.

Seventy players remained on track to exchange figures with their teams Tuesday, but many more were expected to agree to contracts before the swap.

Houston ace Roger Clemens, who still hasn't decided whether to pitch this year or retire, is expected to submit the largest request. Clemens, coming off his record seventh Cy Young Award, could top the record request of \$18.5 million set by Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter in 2001. The Dodgers' Eric Gagne and the Astros' Lance Berkman also were set to exchange figures with their clubs.

One free agent agreed to a contract Monday — second baseman

Baseball roundup

Roberto Alomar accepted a one-year deal from the Tampa Bay Devil Rays. The 12-time All-Star, who must pass a physical before the deal is finalized, hit just .263 with four homers and 24 RBIs in 56 games for Arizona and the Chicago White Sox last season, when he was sidelined from April 21 to June 22 after breaking his right hand when he was hit by a pitch.

Also, Carlos Delgado's agent said the free-agent first baseman had narrowed his list of possible teams to four: Baltimore, Florida, the New York Mets and Texas. The agent, David Sloane, said he planned to meet with the Marlins again Tuesday.

Soriano, acquired by Texas from the New York Yankees in the Alex Rodriguez trade last February, made \$5.4 million last season, when he hit .280 with 28 homers and 91 RBIs. Several teams have inquired about a trade for Soriano.

Izuris, a switch-hitter who turns 25 next month, had by far his best season last year, hitting .288 with 193 hits, four homers, 62 RBIs and 90 runs. He stole 25 bases in 34 attempts and won his first All-Glove, committing only 10 errors.

Izuris, who made \$358,500 last season, receives a \$300,000 signing bonus and will earn \$2.05 mil-

lion this year, \$3.1 million in 2006, and \$4.15 million in 2007. Los Angeles has a \$308 option at \$5.85 million with a \$300,000 buyout.

San Francisco infielder Pedro Feliz agreed to a \$6.1 million, two-year deal, and Arizona left-hander Randy Choate settled for a \$1.3 million, two-year contract.

Cincinnati agreed to one-year contracts with outfielders Adam Dunn (\$4.6 million) and Austin Kearns (\$930,000).

Also, getting one-year deals were St. Louis right-hander Jason Marquis (\$3 million), Baltimore outfielder Luis Matos (\$1,025,000), Angels outfielder Jeff DaVanon (\$925,000) and Houston right-hander Brandon Duckworth (\$500,000).

In a deal late Sunday, left-handed reliever J.C. Romero agreed to a \$2.7 million, two-year contract with Minnesota.

In deals announced Tuesday: Right-hander Tomo Ohka agreed to a \$2.75 million, one-year contract with the Washington Nationals, a raise of \$412,500.

The Texas Rangers agreed to a one-year contract with outfielder Gary Matthews Jr.

Mathews, 30, batted .275 with 11 home runs and 36 RBIs in 87 games for Texas last season.

The Colorado Rockies locked up two key parts of their rotation, agreeing to contracts with right-hander Jason Jennings and lefty Joe Kennedy.

Teen Invited to play in LPGA Championship

The Associated Press

HAVRE DE GRACE, Md. — Michelle Wie accepted an invitation Monday to play in the LPGA Championship, making it likely the 15-year-old golfer will compete in all four of the women's majors this year.

Wie and other top amateurs like Paula Creamer and Jane Park have not played the McDonald's LPGA Championship because it was for professionals. But the tournament expanded its field from 144 to 150 players, offering one of those additional spots to a "leading amateur."

Three extra exemptions will go to a top player from the Korea LPGA, the Japan LPGA and the Ladies European Tour, and the remaining spots will go to the next two LPGA Tour players from a priority list.

The LPGA Championship will be played June 9-12 at Buller Rock.

Wie already accepted an amateur exemption to the Kraft Nabisco Championship on March 24-27, and she is exempt to the U.S. Women's Open in late June because she tied for 13th a year ago.

She is expected to get an exemption to the Women's British Open at Royal Birkdale in July.

Wie is coming off her second appearance in the PGA Tour, shooting rounds of 75-74 in the Sony Open to miss the cut by seven shots.

Suspended QB Marcus Vick rejoins Hokies

BLACKSBURG, Va. — Virginia Tech quarterback Marcus Vick was cleared Monday to rejoin the team after being suspended last season because of a night of drinking with underage girls.

The younger brother of Atlanta Falcons' quarterback Matt Vick joined his teammates for a meeting and started classes. The university and head coach Frank Beamer cleared the 20-year-old to return to all football-related activities after being suspended for the fall semester.

Marcus Vick was arrested in February 2004, along with teammates Mike Imoh and Brenden Hill, after an encounter with 14-

Sports briefs

and 15-year-old girls at the quarterback's apartment in Blacksburg.

Vick avoided jail by pleading no contest to a misdemeanor charge.

Vick also pleaded guilty to recklessness and no contest to marijuana possession after a traffic stop last summer.

"I'm excited to be back — I missed this place," Vick said in a statement. "I know that I hurt a lot of people who only want to see me succeed. I'd like to try to make up to them. I'm appreciative to the university and Coach Beamer for giving me this opportunity. Now I'm ready to put the past behind me and concentrate on the future."

Suspended Pitt guard charged with burglary, simple assault

PITTSBURGH — Suspended Pittsburgh guard Yuri Demetrius faces burglary and simple assault charges after allegedly entering a former girlfriend's apartment twice through a bedroom window and hitting her with a closed fist, university police said Monday.

Demetrius, suspended indefinitely by coach Jim Donnan after being arrested Sunday, will have a preliminary hearing Thursday.

Dixon said Sunday that Demetrius would not practice while serving the suspension, but did not mention the player's arrest.

World Cup tickets to go on sale Feb. 1

HAMBURG, Germany — Tickets for the 2006 World Cup go on sale online Feb. 1, with 850,000 of the 3.2 million seats available in the first stage.

Each fan will be able to order up to four tickets for seven games each. Applications will be processed by lottery after the first two months of sales. Tickets for the 64 games also will be offered through a public qualification process this year and after the final draw.

The tournament begins June 9, 2006, in Munich and ends a month later in Berlin.

For more information online: www.FIFAworldcup.com.

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Suns finish four-game trip on the low road

The Associated Press

The Phoenix Suns are heading home with their high-speed offense dragging, their point guard hurting and their losses mounting. It was a miserable road trip for the NBA's best team.

Tayshaun Prince scored a career-high 26 points to lead the Detroit Pistons past slumping Phoenix 94-80 on Monday, dropping the Suns to 0-4 on their road trip and 31-8 for the season.

"It's time to go home. It has been a tough road trip," Suns coach Mike D'Antoni said. "Obviously, they beat us on the boards, beat us all day, beat us up — beat us in anything you want to talk about."

The Suns were held to a season-low point total without Steve Nash, who was sidelined for a second consecutive game with a bruised left thigh. The point guard hopes to play Wednesday at home against Memphis.

"Obviously, their team is different without Steve Nash," Detroit guard Chauncey Billups said. "But I just thought we played good."

While the Suns have struggled recently, the Pistons have started to return to the form that led them to the NBA championship last season, winning for the sixth straight time — and 11th in 13.

Prince has played a big role in the run, averaging 23 points in his last three games. He made the winning shot Saturday against Philadelphia.

The last three weeks, he has been a stretch as good as any young player is going to have," Pistons coach Larry Brown said. Detroit's Richard Hamilton scored 16 points, Rasheed Wallace and Antonio McDyess each had 13 points and eight rebounds, and Ben Wallace added 11 points and 15 rebounds.

Joe Johnson led the Suns with 17 points. Amare Stoudemire scored 16 and Quentin Richardson had 13, but the Pistons outscored Phoenix 57-41 and had 13 more offensive rebounds.

Jazz 102, Lakers 94: At Los Angeles, Matt Harless scored 19 points, Raja Bell had 14 of his 16 in the fourth quarter and Utah



Suns, from left, Shawn Marion, Quentin Richardson, Joe Johnson, and Amare Stoudemire sit on the bench during the fourth quarter of their fourth straight loss to Detroit on Thursday. Detroit held Phoenix to a season-low point total in its 94-80 victory.

beat the Lakers for just its fourth win in 18 games.

Caron Butler led the Lakers with 26 points and six rebounds.

The Lakers played their second game without star Kobe Bryant, who severely sprained his right ankle last Thursday. Team spokesman John Black said because the game that Bryant will be sidelined at least two more weeks.

Bulls 88, Knicks 86: At New York, Ben Gordon scored on a driving 8-footer with one-tenth of a second remaining to give Chicago its seventh straight win, the Bulls' longest winning streak since the 1997-98 team won 13 in a row.

Stephon Marbury had 25 points to lead the Knicks, who have lost seven of eight.

Bucks 99, Bobcats 92: Michael Redd scored 27 points and Dan Gadzuric had 13 points and 10 re-

bounds to help visiting Milwaukee break its four-game losing streak.

Emeka Okafor had 15 points and 10 rebounds for the slumping Bobcats, who have dropped five straight.

76ers 95, Hornets 91: Kenny Thomas had 21 points and 15 rebounds, Allen Iverson scored 29 and the 76ers nearly wasted a 25-point lead in the fourth quarter before beating visiting New Orleans.

New Orleans, playing without injured leading scorer Baron Davis, was led by Lee Nallion's 23 points.

Nets 85, Hawks 84: Jason Kidd scored 19 of his 23 points in the second half, and New Jersey ended a four-game losing streak with a win in Atlanta.

Vince Carter also scored, 23 points for New Jersey, which broke a five-game road losing

streak.

Al Harrington led Atlanta with 22 points.

Kings 89, Clippers 83: At Los Angeles, Chris Webber scored 23 points and Curtino Mobley hit a clutch three-pointer with 59.6 seconds left for Sacramento.

Mobley scored 19 points in his second game with Sacramento since being acquired from Orlando for Doug Christie on Jan. 10. Sacramento has won four straight.

Elton Brand had 24 points and 10 rebounds for Los Angeles.

Raptors 100, Timberwolves 91: Donyell Marshall made six three-pointers and scored 23 points, leading Toronto to its first win in Minnesota since beginning NBA play in 1995-96.

Rafael Alston had 18 points and 15 assists for the Raptors, who snapped an 11-game road losing streak, one shy of a franchise

record.

Wally Szczerbiak led the Timberwolves with 25 points for Minnesota, which fell to 3-7 in January.

Grizzlies 99, Rockets 80: At Memphis, Tenn., Stromile Swift scored 18 points and Jason Williams added 16 to lead the Grizzlies to their ninth win in 10 games.

Tracy McGrady had 28 points for Houston, which had its four-game winning streak end.

Warriors 107, Nuggets 97: At Oakland, Calif., Jason Richardson did everything in his first game back from a sprained ankle, scoring a career-high 42 points and matching his career best with eight assists to help Golden State end its season-long nine-game losing streak.

Carmelo Anthony had 24 points and eight rebounds in Denver's seventh loss in eight games.

Bryant doesn't have fracture, still out two more weeks

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Lakers star Kobe Bryant will be sidelined at least two more weeks with a severely sprained right ankle.

Team spokesman John Black said before the Lakers faced the Utah Jazz on Monday night that the NBA's second-leading scorer was examined earlier in the day by team physician Dr. Steve Lombardo and foot specialist Philip Kwong.

A CT scan confirmed there was no fracture.

"Kobe will be re-evaluated in approximately one week," Black said. "He has made improvement. He still can't put weight on his right foot."

Black said there was no target date for

NBA briefs

Bryant's return.

"We're just saying a minimum of two weeks," Black said. "We'll have a better idea next week."

Should Bryant return in two weeks, he'll miss a minimum of six more games and eight overall.

Bryant, hurt in the first quarter of Thursday night's victory over Cleveland, was placed on the injured list Saturday — before the Lakers beat Golden State.

"We were hoping for far better, but that's the way it is in this league," Lakers coach Rudy Tomjanovich said regarding Bryant's status. "You can always hope. I'm not a medical guy."

Tomjanovich said he spoke with Bryant early Monday.

"He said it was still throbbing," the coach said, adding Bryant seemed to be in good spirits.

When asked what the Lakers do differently without Bryant, Tomjanovich replied: "We just run different plays. There's plays where he's the focal point. Obviously, we're not running a lot of them."

Lamar Odom and Caron Butler have picked up the slack since Bryant was injured.

"It could have been more serious," Butler said. "His spirits are high — it's getting better. We're just praying for him, hope he gets better soon."

Bryant, averaging 27.5 points per game,

was injured when he landed on Cleveland forward Ira Newble's right foot while going for a rebound under the Cavaliers' basket.

Rookie Sasah Vujacic started Saturday and Monday in Bryant's guard spot.

Magic activate center DeClercq

ORLANDO, Fla. — Magic center Andrew DeClercq was activated from the injured list Tuesday after being sidelined all season because of surgery on his right knee.

To make roster room, center Mario Kasun was sent to the injured list with left knee tendinitis. The rookie averaged 2.6 points and 2.5 rebounds in 25 games.

DeClercq has averaged 4.8 points and 4.3 rebounds during his nine-year career.

Steelers expect improved play from Roethlisberger

Mistakes will be more costly this week

BY ALAN ROBINSON
The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH

Alan Faneca may be trying to motivate Ben Roethlisberger again. The offensive lineman said play for Sunday's AFC championship game against New England, after the rookie quarterback's errors nearly led to a play-off loss to the New York Jets.

"He's going to have to pick his game up," Faneca said Monday. "We're all going to have to pick our game up, and it's going to take our best effort of the season to win this week."

Roethlisberger, the NFL's Offensive Rookie of the Year, threw two interceptions — one for a touchdown and another creating Doug Brien's potential game-winning field goal try — and got nothing going as the Jets scored 17 consecutive points in the second and third quarters.

The Steelers came back to win 20-17 in overtime Saturday, but only after Brien missed two field goal tries in the final two minutes of the fourth quarter.

"He was off a little bit, but we were all off a little bit as an offense," Faneca said.

Faneca wasn't singling out the rookie, but said that kind of quarterback play won't be good enough. "Not after the Super Bowl champion Patriots held NFL MVP Peyton Manning's high-output Colts offense to a field goal in a 20-3 win Sunday."

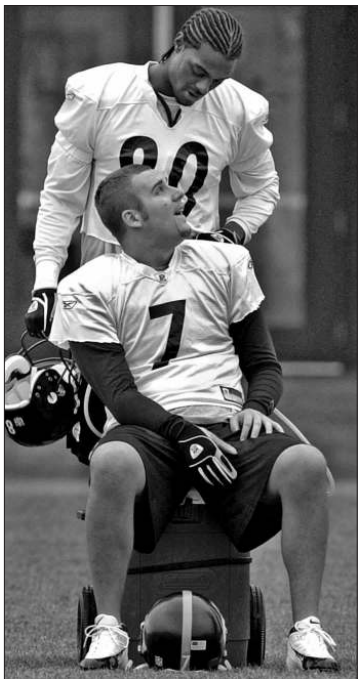
Still, Faneca's motivating words were reminiscent of those the day after former starting quarterback Tommy Maddox injured an elbow Sept. 19 in Baltimore, making Roethlisberger the starter by default.

Then, Faneca said he wasn't overly excited about going into a game with "some little young kid who's just out of college" rather than a veteran like Maddox. Roethlisberger went on to lead the Steelers to a 13-3 victory in Miami.

If Roethlisberger picked up a Sunday newspaper, and he insists he doesn't, he would have read fan comments about how a young Maddox to replace him despite an unequalled 14-0 record as a starter.

"He had a rough game, people were really down on him and said he played bad, but he's a young quarterback, and he has a lot in his face right now," linebacker James Farrior said. "But he's such a good player, he knows how to handle every situation like he's done it all year, and he's sure do the same this week."

Especially since the Patriots will likely try to be in the rookie's



Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger (7) suffered through a miserable game against the Jets, but Pittsburgh still won. He likely won't be as lucky this week if he has a similar performance against the Patriots.

face all night, something they didn't do in their 34-20 loss in Pittsburgh on Oct. 31. Roethlisberger threw two touchdown passes to Plaxico Burress as the Steelers opened a 21-3 lead in the first quarter and went on to end New England's 21-game winning streak.

Faneca thinks Roethlisberger will be just fine if he quickly moves on to the Patriots and doesn't keep replaying the mistakes against New York.

"Everybody always wants to know how he handles the pressure, the setbacks," Faneca said. "Just like everybody else, nobody likes it, but you've got to think about it for a minute, brush it off and move on to the next play."

That's how Ben's been handling things all year."

The Steelers don't sound overly concerned that, unlike the other NFL division champions coming off a first-week bye — the Patriots, Falcons and Eagles — they struggled in their play-off opener. The Jets nearly won despite not scoring a touchdown offensively in either game against Pittsburgh this season.

The Steelers' message seems to be: This week, not last week, is the week they must play well. "We have all the confidence in the world in Ben," cornerback Deshaun Townsend said. "We were 15-1 during the season because of him. He's a very confident guy, very poised for a rookie and I'm sure he'll do fine."

Marine at Iwakuni wins overall award in NFL Challenge

Stars and Stripes

The recently completed NFL season proved to be profitable for a Marine Corps master sergeant assigned to Iwakuni Air Station in Japan.

James "Woody" Biggs, 37, of Folsom, Calif., correctly guessed the outcome of 167 out of 254 selected games in the 2004 NFL season, outdistancing 1,936 other entrants for the grand prize of \$1,000 in the NFL Challenge, a season-long contest sponsored by Stars and Stripes and Oconee.com.

"I was shocked, to be honest with you," said Biggs, assigned to Marine Aircraft Group-12.

The contest began at the start of the NFL season. Each week, entrants picked winners of each NFL game, while also putting a number of points on each game that indicated confidence in each selection.

Biggs won the first week of the contest, garnering a \$100 gift certificate courtesy of Team-Store.com, and remained in the top five the rest of the way. But he confessed to worry about "two

guys with me who were really good competitors."

In Week 15 of the 17-week season, he said, he "picked a couple of games that went sour," including San Diego over Indianapolis, a game the Colts won 34-31 in overtime. He fell to sixth place at that juncture.

"When Week 17 came up, I kept saying to myself, I gotta nail it," Biggs said. He picked 10 of the 16 games correctly "but I put the right amount of points on the right amount of games and managed to get lucky," he said.

Biggs, who has played the NFL Challenge all three years it has been contested, became the third straight overall winner stationed in Japan. He also became the first overall winner to snare one of the weekly prizes.

Though originally from California, Biggs proudly proclaims himself a "lifelong Pittsburgh Steelers fan" and entered the NFL Challenge under the pseudonym "SteelFrogWood."

So what does Biggs plan to do with the \$1,000 prize? "I'll pay my bills," he said. "Christmas."

Sherman moving on with diminished role

The Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Mike Sherman plans to make the best of his diminished role with the Green Bay Packers.

Sherman will stay on as coach after being stripped of his general manager duties over the weekend. He said Monday that he'd like to remain in Green Bay beyond 2005, when his contract expires, but stressed that was up to new boss Ted Thompson.

Sherman said he never considered quitting after losing the GM title.

"I've never resigned from anything in my life. I'm not about to do it over this. I still have the best job in the National Football League," Sherman said.

Sherman is due \$3.2 million in 2005, and team President Bob Harlan said that salary won't be slashed with his decreased duties.

In his first public comments since the front-office shake-up, Sherman said Monday he was proud of the job he did as GM but refused to criticize Harlan's decision to demote him.

"I think as any competitor, you hate to let go of anything," Sherman said. "I would be lying to say that that was an easy thing for me. But after you digest everything and you understand the reasons for why things are done, it is what it is and you move forward."

Ravens hire Fassel, Neuheisel

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — The Baltimore Ravens completed a shake-up of their coaching staff Tuesday during Jim Fassel's offensive coordinator, Rick Neuheisel as quarterback coach and

NFL briefs

promoting Rex Ryan to defensive coordinator.

Fassel, who coached the New York Giants from 1997-03, worked as a senior consultant to the Ravens this season. He wanted another head coaching job, but he did not receive an offer and will now try to improve the league's 31st-ranked offense. He replaces Matt Cavanaugh, who resigned under pressure.

Neuheisel has been out of coaching since being fired by the University of Washington in June 2003 for participating in a high-stakes basketball pool. After impressing the Ravens while interviewing for the job as offensive coordinator, he was hired for the task of refining the skills of quarterback Kyle Boller, a role Fassel filled last season.

Ryan takes over for Mike Nolan, who left Monday to become head coach of the San Francisco 49ers. Ryan has coached the Ravens' defensive line coach since 1999.

Parcells ousts two assistants

IRVING, Texas — Bill Parcells took the first big step in his offseason overhaul of the Dallas Cowboys' coaching staff Monday when he dumped two assistants: offensive line coach George Warhop and kicking coach Steve Hoffman.

Warhop's unit was among the team's biggest disappointments this season, and he said nearly two weeks ago that he'd been told he would be let go. He'll be replaced by tight end coach Tony Sparano, who was Cleveland's offensive line coach in 2000.

Atlanta's potent running game is a down deal

Veteran RB backs up stellar regular season with record-setting game against Rams

BY STEVE HENSON
Los Angeles Times

ATLANTA — One of the NFL's unwritten commandments is to never trust any one over 30 to carry the football.

Yet in his first game since reaching the age that qualifies running backs as senior citizens, Warrick Dunn established an Atlanta Falcons postseason record with 142 yards rushing Saturday in a 47-17 victory over the St. Louis Rams.

Afterward, beaming Falcons players made their way from the field to the locker room as fans shook their hands and slapped their backs. All the players had a spring in their gait after advancing to the NFC championship game, but only Dunn was in a full sprint.

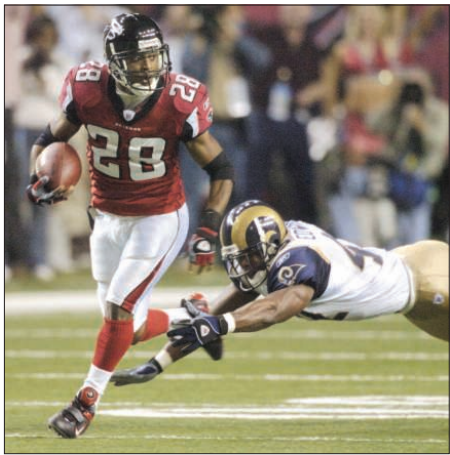
"Look at him, after all those carries," a woman exclaimed. "He can't stop running." Why should he? Dunn still has lightning in his stride and lightness to his step. For the first time in years, he doesn't feel like he's carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders.

He no longer is made to feel like a payroll burden and the owner's pet, not like coach Dan Reeves was fired with three games left in the 2003 season.

He no longer feels obligated to support his five younger siblings the way he did for years after his mother, a Baton Rouge, La., police officer, was shot and killed while working a second job as a security guard in 1993. His three brothers and two sisters all are in college or have graduated.

And he certainly doesn't want to stop until a Super Bowl is reached, not after missing out on the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' title run in 2002. He signed with the Falcons before that season for \$28.5 million over six years, having built a strong résumé in five seasons with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

So Dunn bounced into the locker room, changed quickly and rushed only to put the victory in perspective. This was his ninth playoff game, and several were major disappointments, including an eight-carrier, 1-yard performance in a loss to the Philadelphia Eagles in 2000. He had averaged 41 yards a game and less than 3.0 yards



Eight-year NFL veteran Warrick Dunn (28) rushed for a Falcons playoff-record 142 yards in Saturday's 47-17 rout of the St. Louis Rams. Dunn led Atlanta's top-ranked rushing offense (167 yards per game) with 1,106 rushing yards and nine touchdowns this season.

per carry in the postseason until the break-off game," he said. "I wanted to come out and make some plays to help our team win."

Someone needed him about his age — he turned 30 on Jan. 5. "I feel young," he said. "My legs are fresh, and I'm just having fun."

Dunn had more than 100 yards in the first quarter and scored on runs of 62 and 19 yards, showing that a defense will pay for being overly concerned with explosive quarterback Michael Vick.

"When you have a guy like that rolling one way and we're going the other, the defense tends to go with him," Dunn said. "That created some running lanes that I was able to take advantage of early."

His teammates talked about his leader-

ship and maturity, terms that can carry the subtitle of over-the-hill. Rather than take umbrage and point out that Curtis Martin, Marshall Faulk and Emmitt Smith are also 30-something tailbacks, Dunn took the compliments at face value.

"Guys were so anxious during practice this week they were fighting a little bit," he said. "I tried to help out the tension. Even in pregame, guys had to calm down. I was getting tired before the game even started."

Soon the Rams were tired of chasing him into the end zone. It was the kind of performance Falcons owner Arthur Blank envisioned when he signed Dunn.

Reeves bit his tongue, but made his feelings clear when he used a first-round pick in 2002 to draft running back T.J. Duckett rather than fill the team's more pressing need at receiver.

Blank was said to be smitten by Dunn because of his community involvement, especially the Home for the Holidays charity program that has enabled single mothers from Baton Rouge to St. Petersburg and Tampa, Fla., to become first-time home-

owners.

Blank, who co-founded Home Depot in 1978, soon partnered with Dunn, supplying furnishings in the homes provided to low-income mothers.

Dunn makes the down payments.

"I put them in a position to succeed, to become stable, to try to better their lives, move forward and better their kids' lives," Dunn said. "It's not about me, it's about a mother and her family."

He began the program in 1997, his rookie season, after signing for \$8.8 million as a first-round pick out of Florida State. Helping single mothers had been his dream since his own mother, Cpl. Betty Dunn Smothers of the Baton Rouge Police Department, was shot and killed while escorting a supermarket manager to make a night bank deposit.

Dunn, the oldest of her children, was an 18-year-old high school senior. He thought his dream of playing college football had been dashed, but his grandmother had the help of the Baton Rouge police and other community services to ensure his brothers and sisters were cared for, and he went to Florida State.

In his first year in the NFL, his three youngest siblings moved to Tampa with him.

"Sometimes after practice some of the guys would go out, and I couldn't," Dunn said. "I'd be like, 'I gotta go make dinner for everybody, make sure they do their homework.' They were leaning on me for emotional support, and every now and then I'd give financial benefits."

Now the youngest of his brothers and sisters is 20 and all are self-sufficient. Dunn's attention has turned to providing guidance on the field.

"I think last year (retired fullback) Bobby Christian was maybe 70 percent of our leadership and Warrick 30 percent," Falcons running back coach Ollie Wilson said. "Now, he's probably 100 percent."

"Before, maybe he only spoke if he was asked questions. Now, he starts conversations and asks questions: 'What if we do this? How can we do that better?'"

Dunn racked up his third 100-yard season in 2004, and he got better as the season progressed. His performance against the Rams was his fourth 100-yard game in the past five. Only 5 feet 8, 190 pounds, he started all 16 regular-season games for the first time and set career highs with nine rushing touchdowns and 265 carries.

"I think the misimpression people have about Warrick is that because of his size, he's an outside runner," coach Jim Mora said. "But he's not. He's so good between the tackles because he can find that crease and he can hit it quickly. That's one reason why he's so effective."

And another is that he doesn't stop running — until he reaches the locker room.



9 p.m. Sunday:
AFN-A, AFN-P, AFN-Radio
Game time is Central European.

Déjà vu: Patriots take momentum into Pittsburgh

DÉJÀ VU, FROM BACK PAGE

Yes, New England lost in Pittsburgh, 34-20 on Oct. 31, ending a league-record 21-game winning streak. But Dillon missed that game with a thigh injury and the Patriots rushed for just 5 yards on six attempts.

The spread also reflects the quarterback discrepancy.

Ben Roethlisberger is 14.0 as a starter, eight games better than the previous record for consecutive victories by a rookie QB.

But he is a rookie and the Steelers beat the Jets 20-17 in overtime Saturday despite Big Ben, not because of him. His two interceptions were disastrous — one was returned for a touchdown, the other led to a 43-yard missed field goal by Doug Brien that would have ended Pittsburgh's season if it was good.

Tom Brady, on the other hand, has won all seven postseason games he's started, although he got hurt during the Patriots' title game upset in Pittsburgh three years ago and Drew Bledsoe

came in to throw a TD pass that helped win the game.

That's not to say Pittsburgh doesn't have a chance.

The Steelers gained 417 yards against the Patriots in the regular-season game, 221 on the ground. If they can run again (a better possibility if Seymour is out or hampered), they could control the clock the way the Patriots did against the Colts.

But New England's loss in that game came at a time when it was losing momentum, likely under the pressure of continuing their

record streak (yes, even the Patriots occasionally feel pressure). Now they're picking up momentum, as they seem to do at this time every year.

They're also conscious that next season might not be so easy because they are likely to have to break in new coordinators to replace Charlie Weiss on offense and Romeo Crennel on defense.

Weis already has taken the head coaching job at Notre Dame and has been spending time working for both the Patriots and Fighting Irish. Crennel seems set for



New England Patriots at Pittsburgh Steelers

12:30 a.m. Monday
AFN-A, AFN-P, AFN-Radio

Game time is Central European.

the head coaching job in Cleveland, although he can't accept it or do any work for the Browns until the Patriots' season ends.

The way things look now, that's not likely to be until after the Super Bowl.

SPORTS



Roddick finishes strong in first match;
U.S. Open champ Kuznetsova says
she's innocent of doping, Page 25



Jeff Reed (3) balled out the Steelers with a 33-yard field goal in overtime to beat the Jets on Saturday. Despite winning 15 consecutive games and entering the AFC title game with a 16-1 record and home-field advantage, Pittsburgh starts the week as a 3-point underdog to New England.

New England has the look of a champion once again

BY DAVE GOLDBERG
The Associated Press

Yes, the New England Patriots go to Pittsburgh to face a team that beat them in the regular season and has a 16-1 record with 15 straight wins.

But no, the Patriots probably won't lose to the Steelers in next Sunday's AFC title game. Nor are they likely to

lose in the Super Bowl on Feb. 6, probably against Philadelphia. In fact, after winning two of the past three NFL titles, going 14-2 for the second straight season and shutting down Peyton Manning as no one has done since they did it a year ago, it makes you wonder what happened in 2002, when the Patriots missed the playoffs after finishing 9-7. Dismiss that season and they are a unique team for any era, especially this one.

"What are they going to do now, change the rules again?" Patriots linebacker Teddy Bruschi asked facetiously after Sunday's 20-3 triumph over Manning and the Colts. "Make a rule that we can't play in the snow?"

Technically, the NFL didn't change the rules after the Patriots shut down Manning a year



New England quarterback Tom Brady (above) improved to 7-0 in playoff games but will face the league's top-rated defense at Pittsburgh on Sunday.

ago in the AFC title game. They only added a "point of emphasis" for the officials, cracking down on bumping and grabbing receivers after Indy complained they were continuously mugged in that game.

That change had little effect Sunday.

Even with free-agent rookie Randall Gay, safety Asante Samuel and wide receiver Troy Brown doing most of the work at cornerback in place of the injured Ty Law and Tyrone Poole, Manning's three star wide receivers could rarely get open. All-Pro defensive lineman Richard Seymour, out with a knee injury, was hardly missed.

"Any other team that loses Pro Bowlers loses a lot," Manning



Pats coach Bill Belichick will have a new offensive coordinator next season and most likely will have to hire a defensive coordinator.

said after the game. "But the Patriots never seem to."

It wasn't all defense, especially after intermission during what coach Bill Belichick called "the best half we played this year."

Corey Dillon, whose acquisition by the Patriots may be as significant as Terrell Owens' was for Philadelphia, ran for 144 yards as New England had the ball for 38 minutes, limiting Manning's opportunities.

Dillon is probably the reason the Patriots are favored by three points on the road against the Steelers, very rare for a visitor in a championship contest. That's effectively six points — the Steelers would normally get three for having the home field.

SEE DÉJÀ VU ON PAGE 31



Refreshed Dunn is leading Atlanta's playoff run into Philadelphia

Page 31



Roethlisberger seeks home improvement in AFC title game

Page 30



Spurs put emphatic end to Wizards' seven-game run

Page 28

St. Bonaventure hoops still struggling after scandals Page 26